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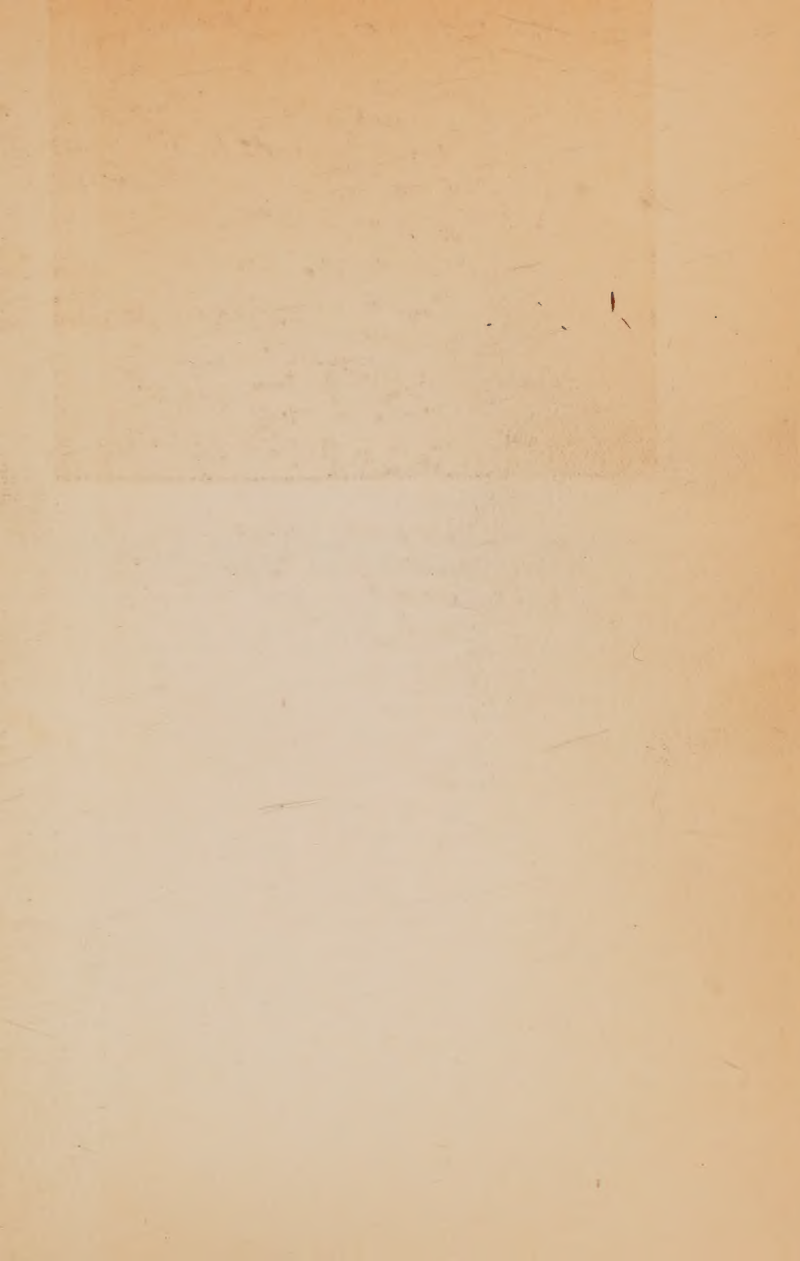
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BEFORE THE MORNING WATCH

BY

F. A. IREMONGER

RECTOR OF QUARLEY,
FORMERLY HEAD OF THE OXFORD HOUSE IN BETHNAL GREEN.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE BISHOP OF LONDON

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VERBODEN TOEGANG

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TOEGANG

INTRODUCTION

THE writer of this excellent Lenten Book has so entirely suppressed himself that I should like to begin by saying a few words about him, and these few words may shed a light upon what he has written. When I first met him he was training for the law, which he subsequently gave up to be ordained. I mention this, because the humble and simple faith which is here recorded has not been attained without facing every possible intellectual difficulty. After his ordination it was not long before we found out something of what was in the writer, and after a few years' devoted labour among the poor of Poplar, he was at my suggestion appointed Head of the Oxford House, Bethnal Green, where he has given another six years' ceaseless labour among the poor, varied only by those periodical visits to Oxford, where he acquired a unique influence over the undergraduates.

When war broke out, the whole of Oxford House poured forth for service—a fine example to the youth of Bethnal Green, who were not slow to follow their example; and of the eighty members of His Majesty's forces who were under "the Head," either for long or short periods, at Oxford House, more than thirty have given their lives already for their country.

I am only saying what I hope he will not mind my saying, and what will certainly throw a light upon certain passages in this book, that it was the extreme mental strain of losing so many of his "boys," who, as I know by a happy similar experience, are like one's own sons, at the Oxford House, coupled with the ceaseless toil of carrying on the Oxford House with a few devoted men pronounced unfit for military service, and the oversight of a large parish, which compelled him to ask me to relieve him last autumn, so that he might find opportunity for spiritual rest and reading in a country parish for a time.

Immediately before leaving London for this "resting-place," he wrote this book; and if its readers will bear in mind the background out of which it comes they will appreciate it the more.

I could have welcomed even more pictures from that life of ceaseless visits; but the touching story of the girl in the workhouse, whose faculties were slowly dying one by one, but whose radiant smile illuminated the whole ward, will live in the memory of those who read it, as an illustration from life of what Faith will do.

For the rest, I will only select three important points out of the many helpful things said in this book.

1. *The need of sympathetic "listeners"* to-day and the real call for the God-inspired and God-guided comforter.

The world is full of sorrow, and it could indeed be said, if any were obliged to say of efforts to comfort, "I could not believe that anyone with any knowledge of human nature could be so clumsy."

The writer traces the cause of the clumsiness in part to the self-consciousness of our race, but I think with the writer that we must not "sit down" under it. Self-consciousness can only be driven out by more consciousness of God, and if as a continuation of the National Mission we are all to bear a more effective witness, either as comforters or as "prophets," we must discipline ourselves to look upon God as everything and ourselves as nothing, and so be able to receive and convey unspoilt and unchecked by self-consciousness the comfort of the Holy Ghost !

2. Then comes the wonderful discovery which has been a revelation to many during the war, that "*if Christ had never lived, He would have had to be invented.*"

I have been much impressed myself by dealing with many souls in many troubles how much the "Cross" has come to its own. Just as it often is the only thing left standing amid ruins in Belgium and France, so the Cross is the only thing left standing in the world of thought to-day. If God had really stayed "on the hills like gods together, careless of mankind," where would our faith in Him have been to-day? It is because He came into the thick of it Himself that we can still trust Him on the bloody battlefield; we can still "follow on" because He is no rose-crowned Apollo, but "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

3. And the last point to which I have space to allude is the excellent chapter on *Prayer*. Many of us, and, I see by a quotation, among us the writer, owe a great deal to a small book by Mr. Fosdick on "The Meaning of Prayer."¹

¹ Published by Student Union, 93, Chancery Lane.

Prayer as mere mendicancy, as a cheap way of "getting things," is a contemptible affair, but Prayer as described in this book, and the book to which I have referred, is a noble and ennobling work of the soul ; it is co-operation with God ; it is acting as God's viceroy, for God, to use the words of Andrew Murray, "rules the world through our prayers."

I hope then that many in what will be a very trying Lent—a Lent that will test our courage and fortitude to the utmost—will read this book. It is written in blood and watered with tears, and if it is read in the spirit in which it is written it cannot fail to give its message of comfort and warning and inspiration to a world which needs them.

A. F. LONDON.

CHRISTMAS, 1916.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE 130th Psalm, with its cry of Repentance and its appeal to Hope, can never have had a more real meaning for our Church and Nation than it has to-day.

In the following chapters, the method which has been adopted is that of meditation on each verse of the Psalm considered separately. It will be understood that a lack of consecutive and connected treatment of the Psalm is inseparable from such a method.

The absence of any allusion to, or discussion of, what we have come to know, during the past year, as Church Problems, may call for explanation. The omission is deliberate. There is little to be added to the abundance of literature published in this connexion by the Council of the National Mission; and Lent would seem to be a time for something of a more positive kind; for deepening rather than for distracting, for penitence rather than for problems.

F. A. I.

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BEFORE THE MORNING WATCH

CHAPTER I

OF OUR PRESENT STATE

“Out of the deep . . .”

ATTEMPTS have been made from time to time, during the past two years, to take stock of our life in Church and Nation. It can hardly be contended that they have met with any general measure of success. Expressions such as high- or low-water mark, maximum strength, and so on, have been used to describe our condition of efficiency and achievement, whether in things spiritual or material. But no sooner have such phrases become current coin, than the march of events has proved them to be at the best inadequate, at the worst misleading or premature. The time for the “general view” has not yet come. Definition seems almost cruel, and analysis is impossible.

Yet it has happened that occasionally we stumble across a word or a phrase which seems to express the truth: a phrase which is incisive, yet inclusive; which is definite enough for its meaning to be unmistakable, yet sufficiently wide to lose none of the force of truth, in the face of unexpected developments and sudden changes. Such a phrase lies before us in the opening words of the *De Profundis*. The Psalmist describes his

nation as being in "the deep." The words strike home. Alike of character and desire, of strain and effort, of sorrow and sin, of the individual and the nation, they hold good. They apply with equal truth to Israel of the exile and to England in the throes of the Great War. Whether we feel pride or shame, hope or despair, as we write the words at the head of a page of English history, matters little at the moment, if only we feel truth. And here truth lies, where it is seldom found, on the surface, that all may see: and, even if the phrase does not invite definition, it does at least suggest a contrast: and for that purpose a retrospect may be allowed.

The contrast is not far to seek. We need no dictionary of words and phrases to remind us that the opposite to "deep" is "shallow": but there was little applause bestowed on the verdict of the French critic, who, after a careful survey of our national life barely four years ago, was not afraid to sum it up as "shallow and unreal." Yet, was it not so? We can remember something of it—"like as a dream when one awaketh"—how that it was meaningless and uninspired: how that the evil of it was unashamed, and the good was spasmodic, confused, and often misdirected: how that enthusiasm was regarded as energy misplaced, and the appeal to the best motives was seldom attempted: how that existence was spiritless, objectless, and vain. We remember the sentimental culture, which was inspired neither by the search after the great secrets, nor by the desire for true knowledge—how superficial it seems to us now! the little table, with its *Rubáiyát*, its *La Rochefoucauld*, its *Marcus Aurelius*—who at least was wise enough to meditate—small volumes in which no gospel of effort or strenuous purpose appeared, to create discomfort by an appeal to the will: volumes for which

our bookseller will tell us "there is not much demand at present." Handbooks there are in plenty, but they deal with "something a little stiffer." Their coverings are not so delicate—there is other work to be done; and the contents range over a wider field. For the sphere of human energy is enlarged to-day, and the tale of the printing-press must be one of activity, for mind, body and soul. No longer is pride of place denied to the books which deal with the things that matter most: with work and service, comfort and hope, life and death. For here, on one counter, are manuals of nursing and first aid, rubbing bindings with books which tell of *Comfort for the Mourner*, *The Way of the Cross*, and *The Life after Death*; and there, on another, are tales of heroism for which we need thank no writer of fiction, side by side with the *Imitation* of Thomas à Kempis and *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Only in the colourings shall we find a narrower choice; and two will strike the eye at every turn, the red and the russet, the colours of the battle-cloth and of the Cross.

Or can we remember what things we used to speak of when we met our friends? Perhaps they were matters of little import, for we have almost forgotten them now. How lightly we played on every theme, as we wandered from one triviality to another, with the same lack of genuine interest in them all! To-day, if our thoughts wander, it is not because we feel no interest in life, but because the centre, the hub, of life and action lies far away: and here at least we can claim that our words follow whither our thoughts have led. For we speak of life and death; not as problems to be discussed, but as near realities: we speak of those who are enduring the one and facing the other daily. Even the "rolling-stone" of the family, who "never would

settle to anything"—we no longer ask where he is or what he is doing. We may not know where he came from, but we have no doubt of the direction in which his face was set: and all we ask is, whether the news is good, whether he is still safe.

And was there suffering, was there sorrow, in the world we once knew? Perhaps there was; nay, there must have been: but there was just little enough of it not to disturb us, to enable us to hide it out of sight. It was something that jarred for the moment. Its existence was an intrusion, but we could be thankful that its range was limited. We could avoid it, for it only came to a few. But now, need more than this be said: that those who have none to sorrow for must indeed have had few to love?

All this would be generally admitted; we are in the deep waters. But the interpretation and the end of it are yet to come. It is not uncommon to hear the state of England to-day described as "wonderful" or "terrible," according to the point of view from which it is regarded, or by some epithet which suggests either finality or fatalism: to find the condition of our country looked upon as a phenomenon rather than as a challenge, as something which demands descriptive analysis rather than active treatment. Yet it cannot be supposed that, because we are in the deep, we should remain there. It is Purgatory rather than Sheol which is suggested by the first words of the Psalm. But the manner of our escape still lies in doubt.

Even less satisfactory is the assumption that we shall come purified through the fire: we, that is, who will be left. It is a possibility, a hope, a theme for prayer and earnest longing, but one which can only be realized by

effort and concentration. It is the spiritual side of this effort which will form the subject of the following chapters, the personal concentration on the things of God. Whether the courage, the inspiration, and the hope of the English people are the same to-day as at the time when we first set out on our terrible task, we may consider as doubtful. All that need be insisted on for the present purpose is that, of whatever sort we are, we must emerge somewhere: and that our last state is in process of evolution now.

In the depth of our sorrow and of our testing, it lies with us to choose one of two alternatives. Let the following words serve to describe them.

" . . . Thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."¹

This alternative will be considered in the next chapter. Here is the other—

"It is indeed a remarkable fact that sufferings and hardship do not, as a rule, abate the love of life; they seem, on the contrary, usually to give it a keener zest. The sovereign source of melancholy is repletion. Need and struggle are what excite and inspire us; our hour of triumph is what brings the void. . . . Germany, when she lay trampled beneath the hoofs of Bonaparte's troopers, produced perhaps the most optimistic and

¹ Deut. xxviii. 65-67.

idealistic literature that the world has seen; and not till the French milliards were distributed in 1871 did pessimism overrun the country in the shape in which we see it there to-day. The history of our own race is one long commentary on the cheerfulness that comes from fighting ills."¹

The names by which the two positions would commonly be described are not unknown: but it were better to let the words tell their own tale.

¹ W. James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 47.

CHAPTER II

OF THE NEED OF UTTERANCE ; AND OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF SYMPATHY

“ . . . have I called . . . ”

THE historian who undertakes, when the tyranny is overpast, to tell the history of these terrible days, will be faced with a double task. He will have a story to tell of action : of movements vast and interdependent, of organization unequalled and hitherto unimagined, of the ceaseless strain of effort pitted against effort, and strength against strength, of fierce tumult and deathless deeds. And if but one half be told, the tale is assured of its immortality.

But there will be another story ; and he who tells it will do well to let time go by, before he gives it to the world. For it will demand an accuracy in analysis and a patience in discrimination, which at present are impossible. It will be a story of spirit, of character and soul. It will take account of motives and ideals ; of fears and hopes, of the depth beneath the tumult, and of the sources, unnumbered and often unnoticed, from which alone action can spring. And further, if the tale be made to cover the widest ground, if the souls of nations as well as of men be included in the analysis, there will be many false prophecies to be exposed, and many long-accepted prejudices to be corrected. “ National characteristics ” will have their place : and here, if anywhere, will the world’s judgments be

found to have been at fault. The weakness or the strength of more than one nation will be discovered to have lain in quarters where their existence had been least suspected.¹

Whether, in that day, the historian will find need to modify certain almost universally held conceptions of the English character, it is not easy as yet to foretell. But two at least of our national characteristics have been fastened upon by critics, both friendly and hostile, of English life; and they are specially worthy of mention when we are thinking of our country's attitude in the face of a sorrow that is shared by all alike, and of the call from the great deep.

In reference to the first of these, the following extract from a letter recently sent to a Church newspaper, by a chaplain with our troops on active service, is of interest, as it corroborates what we already know of our national temperament. "As an Englishman," he writes of the soldier, "he is very reserved about his deeper feelings. . . . It is only here and there that one learns to be certain that underneath the Englishman's reserve—and we are more than usually reserved out here—a tremendous movement is taking place."

For an account of the second, we should do well to study the interesting analysis, which has recently been made, of the difference between the English and the German souls. The author writes: "A distinctly able, well-educated, upper class South German lady first visited England when middle-aged; and she reported

¹ Little more than a generation has passed since Marshal Canrobert, at a dinner party at the British Embassy in Paris, made the following remark in the course of conversation: "*Il y a quatre choses qui font le malheur de la France; la phrase—la pose—le scepticisme—l'égoïsme.*" Which of these, we may wonder to-day, made the glory of Verdun?

to me, after a month's continuous stay in London, that she had (amongst other things) been carefully observing the countenances of hundreds of Anglican clerics she had been meeting, and that upon every one of these faces was written unmistakably 'hypocrite.' Only after many a bewildered surmise did I discover the interestingly far-reaching, because racial, reason of this preposterously unfair judgment. Anglican clerics are mostly very self-conscious . . ."

There can be little doubt that the judgment pronounced in the last sentence is not an unreasonable one: though, to be inclusive, its range should certainly be extended. But that there is any connexion between this self-consciousness and the "Englishman's reserve," we are as a rule slow to discern and loth to admit. Yet is it not true that the connexion is vital, that they act and re-act ceaselessly upon each other? It is self-consciousness that drives our life inward, leaving little room for growth or freedom. It is our reserve which confines it there, and makes ever more contracted the circle within which that life moves. These two characteristics should, for our present purpose, at least be noticed; for they render more difficult of attainment that free fellowship of sympathy and love in which, at this time, we should be bound, ever more closely, one to another.

We are faced then, to-day, with an anguish such as has never yet been laid upon our country, and with a self-conscious reserve, which we have inherited from our forefathers. Is it not to be hoped that this latter may at last be broken down? Or must we contemplate the terrible alternative which is offered to us, if in our

¹ F. von Hügel, *The German Soul*, p. 147.

sorrow we remain isolated and aloof, and keep silence in the great deep?

For what is this alternative? What is to be the refuge of our loneliness? Will it not be either Stoicism or Buddhism, or perhaps a strange mixture of the two; an attempt to gain the will to endure in a joyless world, and the longing to be free from all energy of action or desire? At first, the prospect seems not too sad. If we limit our interest to ourselves, at any rate we know our limitations. If there be no sorrow but our own, there is at least a boundary beyond which it cannot extend. But whither, at the last, will this view of life lead us? It is not difficult to foretell. For we do well to remember that we embark on no uncharted sea when we set out on such a voyage. Many have gone before us, strange sad souls who have found little to love or hope for in the world, whose friends were waiting for the word which should give the entry to their hearts, who refused sympathy and embraced despair, who killed the heart to love and the will to believe.

One such at least has told his tale, and told it as if every word were written with his heart's blood. Read the *Journal Intime* of Amiel, and you will be able to trace, step by step, the beginnings of introspection leading to aloofness and gloom, and culminating in despair. "Man is the great deep," cried this sad prophet, as if in triumph. "Heaven and hell, the universe itself, are within us." Mean hiding-place, indeed, for so mighty a content! No wonder that life became intolerable, with such a vast burden to support, so that "the thirst for the long sleep" grew upon him, till the last and saddest cry falls from his lips: "How difficult it is to live, tired heart of mine!"

Should the day ever come when light and love have

been driven from the earth, Amiel's last resting-place will be had in reverence, and many will sing their saddest songs, as they visit his tomb. But, until that day, those who have learned to believe that life is love, who will pray to be delivered from a death-cry such as his, have a right to ask one question: Could he hope for any end but this? For what is there left in life, if it be here that we take our stand, in a gloom and loneliness of our own choosing? Action becomes impossible, for its arena—the moving world—is utterly remote. Duty is meaningless, or at best “the pole-star of a wandering humanity”: for have we not repudiated the debt we owe to our fellow-men, which is the second greatest charge on our life's account? Love has lost its charm, for those who might receive it are as unworthy, on our own showing, as we are to offer it. And work (not the least of our joys here) ceases to have more import or object than the weaving of ropes of sand.

Such, then, is the life with the inward look: and it is something like this which is to be expected if the silence of the great deep be not broken—a world devoid of light, of fellowship, and of hope. Surely, few would dare, with this prospect, to keep silence. “Despair is not a durable situation.”

Reverently, we listen for the call from the depths of our country's sorrow. How can we help you? we ask. You have but to speak, and we will answer. Tell us of your hope and your need.

“We have our memories.” Memories of the years that are gone—God keep them fresh for us all: the comfort of them is unspeakable. “Do you remember . . . ?”—how naturally the words spring to our lips to-day! We live again through those days of

companionship and love, when we shared our secrets and made our plans, when nothing seemed impossible to dream of or to achieve: days when we trod together ground which will be for ever sacred, "at home"—where every path and tree held its tale of our childhood and of our youth—

“ . . . And all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long distant summer-time,
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And horn, and morn on those delightful hills. . . .”

All this, and more, is ours for ever. Voices from the past, faces in the fire, days that are gone—let us hear them and see them, and call them back. God would not have it otherwise. But—can we *live* on them?

Yet would we be spared the question. We have heard the appeal that we should take up our life again, and create fresh interests, and find new fields of love and endeavour. And we reply that we have not the heart to do it. Let the future come to us, it can bring neither new terror nor new joy. We would neither make it nor welcome it. We are content to wait till the last darkness come.

But can the question be answered in this way? And is this the best that life has yet to offer? For life is fellowship; and to cut ourselves off from the world's fellowship, to indulge in the silent loneliness of despair, must mean that, soon or late, we cease to live. Is there, then, no fellowship with the departed? Most assuredly, there is: and, as we search for all the consolations which our Holy Faith can offer, we realize that this has been re-discovered: that the "one Communion and Fellowship in the mystical Body of Christ" is not confined to those who kneel at the earthly altars by our side, but that joined with us in Sacrament and prayer

are our loved ones who wait in the Paradise of God, and the Saints triumphant in the heavenly places.

Yet will the question recur: What of the living? What of those who claim our service and our love to-day, who are longing to fill the gaps in our lives, and to bring to us the tenderest sympathy and love? ". . . His room is just as he left it, and I sit there alone day after day." And this, while all the world is waiting to be your friend!

Can we have forgotten the words of Him Who said: "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work"? Would not the first echo of the appeal to "work while it is day" come from the lips of those who have passed from us, and who least of all could be happy, if—for their sakes, as we would say—we surrender ourselves to the inactivity of despair?

So, from the depth of our sorrow, God help us to take heart of grace, and to arise: to call to our fellow-men, not as ships that call one to another from fear, in the darkness of fog or night, but as men call who in the one fellowship bear, strongly and hopefully, the one burden, and think it not shame to tell aloud of the anguish of the great deep. To know how much or how little to say is one of the secrets of friendship. Shall we ever know how much we have lost by saying too little?

And here we may ask why the call from the deep is not more insistent, and the silence more often broken; why many a sufferer prefers to bear the burden alone. It is a question which we might almost dread to ask, as we wonder whether there be not a further reason, in addition to that which is the outcome of our national temperament. For is it not at least possible that

sufferers are led to accept the resignation of loneliness because they do not find in us the sympathy for which they have a right to look, because the need which they feel is not satisfied when they open their hearts to us who have been called by Christ's Name? If this be even partially true, then there is need for searching self-examination, and for that sincere penitence which springs from the consciousness that we have fallen short of our profession. We are left in no doubt as to what that profession is. From the day of our Baptism, it is "to follow the example of our Saviour Christ." And as we trace the "blessed steps of His most holy life,"—beginning from the day when He stood and read, in the Book of the Law, of One Who had been "sent to heal the broken-hearted," through the years during which, in village street and home, He healed those that were sick and restored to the mourners their dead, up to that last night in the guest-chamber, when the anxiety for the coming separation was more in His thoughts than the dread of the Agony—we must be led to see how sorely we fail to follow His example, if we do not offer the ministry of comfort and healing to those who need it and would gladly receive it. Yet the number must be small of those in whose heart, at this time, there is not a real and Christ-like yearning to offer help and sympathy. And if ever pity be well spent, surely it can be on those whose courage has long given way, whose natures have been hardened and embittered because, when they have tried "in an honest and good heart" to express what they most deeply feel, some awkwardness of speech or manner has hindered the right delivery of the message. Ill-success, even rebuffs, have been the only result of their good intentions; and they have long since ceased to persevere.

But now, if ever, the God who knows their true longing and the world's need will give them the courage to try again ; so that they may say, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." (*Is.* i. 4.)

What then can we do, in whose ears the call from the deep rings with its unceasing appeal, if we are to be blessed with the simple but unrivalled joy of being able to "heal the broken-hearted" ?

We can pray, first, that God will give us a reverent insight into human nature. Without this, our best efforts, however well intended, may fail. To some this seems to come, as we say, by the light of nature. Blessed souls, on whom God has bestowed this precious gift in great measure ! May He use you often, in these terrible days, to heal the anguish of the world's broken heart !

The following is an extract from a letter, written by a lady to one who could not free himself from picturing continually the awful nature of the death which, as he thought, had been the fate of one whom he loved much. "I sometimes think that when they hear the words, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation,' the loved ones will look up into our dear Lord's face, and will say: 'Did we? We had forgotten.'" And the picture in the sufferer's mind changed as by a miracle. It was no longer the agony of which he thought. The terror and the torture of the death, the helplessness and confusion, the last cry of the passing, all this was swept away. There remained only a vision of peace, into which the horror of the past could never again enter, to mar or to lessen the calm joy of eternal life.

But what of those who are not so endowed? If we do not possess at first hand this insight, if it is difficult for us to find the spot where the wound hurts (which is the beginning of all sympathy); if this seems to be one of the graces which God has withheld from us, we can at least, through the books which we read, make ourselves familiar with those to whom it was truly a second nature. The pleading of Savonarola with Romola, on the road from Florence, as she fled from her husband and her home: Fogazzaro's Saint bending over the bedside of the old peasant, who lay dying in a hut on the hillside at Jenne: the manly sympathy with which Janet Dempster's confession was received by her pastor and friend—from these and a hundred other scenes from the books which we have read, we can learn the secret of that strong comfort which alone can heal the heart of the sorrowing or the outcast. If it be true that Bishop King once gave as his advice to a young priest, that (if he wished to have a real insight into the souls of his people) he should "read the Bible and good novels," here at least is counsel which all can receive to their profit. By so doing, we should be saved the commission of many a blunder, in circumstances which make it particularly difficult for a mistake to be forgiven and lost confidence to be regained: for it is not only once, alas! that heart-breaking words such as these have found their way into the letters which we receive from our friends: "I could not have believed it possible for any one with the slightest knowledge of human nature to have been so clumsy."

Again, we can "remember the time past." There is no life which has been lived continuously in the sunshine, in which there has been no cloudy and dark day. And, if it be a vocation to suffer, if each heart-

ache be part of the eternal purpose of God, there must be recognized, behind the love which sent it, the unspoken but imperious demand that the vocation to which we are called should not be for ourselves alone. Certainly there is a dangerous individualism in the pious verdict which we pass on our own sufferings, that such and such a discipline or sorrow has been sent to us "for *our* good." Would there not be more of truth in the corresponding phrase, which is so frequently upon the lips of the poor, that it has been sent "for a good purpose"? Such a view is not only more social, but also more scriptural. The bed-ridden or the heart-broken, who would attempt to solve the eternal riddle of suffering, would indeed be puzzled if in the inquiry the terms of reference were limited to the sufferer alone: if, in the isolation of a single life, it were hoped to find either a justification of God's dealings with the world, or a complete message of comfort for the stricken soul. The truth rather is that, whether in cloud or sunshine, we are the city set on a hill; and that, in whatever direction our vocation may lie, whether it be in the priesthood, or the way of the Counsels, or the way of suffering, our light is to shine before men, to the glory of God our Father.

It is, indeed, in lives of uninterrupted pain that we notice the most inspiring, if most pathetic, instances of how the vocation to suffer may be fulfilled. The shining faces, which we are sometimes privileged to see, of the bed-ridden who cannot hope to be cured, tell us most plainly of the sufferers' work for the world. Until a few years ago, there lay, in the cheerless ward of a Poor Law Infirmary, a girl who was stricken with a disease which paralysed the whole body, limb by limb. The day came when she could move neither hand nor foot,

her only sensation being one of ceaseless and ever-increasing pains in the head, as the disease mounted slowly to her brain. And yet, she had found her vocation and loyally fulfilled it. For in that atmosphere of senility, hopelessness, and gloom, her corner was the one bright spot of the ward. The feeble and depressed would come to her bedside, simply that they might see her face, on which the smile of joy and inward peace shone, almost continuously, through deepening lines of pain. And if ever the dark moments came, when the racked body claimed a short triumph over the spirit, they were followed by a penitence, deep and heartfelt, because she had not been true to the vocation to which God had called her.

In a lesser degree we are all sent to be witnesses to this truth. If there be any memories which should indeed be sacred, it is those which remind us of days and nights of pain, of times of suffering or bereavement; not only because they enable us to claim that we have had some share of the world's sorrows and the Saviour's Cross, but also because through them we are enabled to help those who from time to time are in the darkness. So it is that to remember the time past is to take into our hands one of the surest balms for healing which God has given to us.

Once more, we can bring to the sufferer the "ministry of sympathetic listening. You will find that sometimes this is all that a man requires, a sympathetic audience. It is not that he needs your speech: he needs your ears."¹

How many are ready to talk, but how few can listen! The art of conversation, if such it can be called, has been much studied, too elaborately, some would think.

¹ J. H. Jowett, *The Preacher, His Life and Work*, p. 191.

We are tolerably familiar with the recognized expressions, of parting and greeting, of reproof and benediction, of polite disagreement and casual acquiescence. The mannerisms too of each succeeding age, as well as its vocabulary, impose their tyranny upon us. "Imitative by nature"—was ever truer judgment passed on the human race?

And this conventionality has invaded the sanctuary of our Faith. The language of religion has become, if not tainted, at least suspected. A deep sincerity is required, if the ordinary phrases of religious consolation are to ring true. Nay more, must we not confess that sometimes we have shrunk from using them, from the fear that they will mean no more to the sufferer than, by our very familiarity with them, they have come to mean to ourselves?

But the art of listening! Who has ever thought it worthy of study? Yet, could not a volume be devoted to it? In such a book there would be much to tell. It would begin, we imagine, with the savage, learning in his solitude the language of the birds and beasts, hearing in the thunder the dread voice of an Unseen Power, or listening, ear to ground, for the footfall of an enemy. It would go on to tell of messages misunderstood, of kingdoms lost and causes betrayed; of lovers' whispers and battle-cries that have stirred the soul. It would tell of the isle of Patmos, where the aged disciple's ears were tuned to catch the notes of the heavenly music: and of the saint of every age, kneeling in the stillness of expectant adoration, waiting to hear the voice of his Beloved. "My sheep hear My Voice." "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Surely also the "ministry of sympathetic listening" would find its place in the record: for it has brought

much comfort to the troubled soul. What can we say? is our first thought when the tale of sorrow or sin is finished. And then we remember that the greatest spiritual directors say little; their words are burning but few. The more that is told, the less there is to be said: it is only when a confession is incomplete that questions need be asked.

To know how much or how little to say is indeed only given by the Holy Spirit, Who will teach us in that hour what to say, and to Whom—even while we listen—we can pray for guidance and light.

Let us, in conclusion, call to mind some words from one of the last chapters in the Old Testament:

"They that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels. . . ."

So shall there be a new fellowship. The joy of telling and the love of listening shall be in it; and none will be afraid to speak, because many will rejoice to hear and help. The stranger and the desolate, as they enter the Temple of the Fellowship, will hear a new song. It will be borne to them, across the sacred places, from the beat of a thousand loving hearts. *Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

CHAPTER III

OF THE CALL TO GOD, AND OF HIS RESPONSE

“ . . . unto Thee, O Lord.”

FROM the outward look, and through it, we pass to the upward. From a life which has gained new love and sympathy through fellowship with man, we reach out to the life which is enriched to the uttermost with light and purpose, by fellowship with God. Nor let it be thought that this order of progress is accidental. It is fundamental. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and *every one that loveth* is born of God and *knoweth God*. . . . For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen?” The demands which God makes, as towards Himself, upon each one of His children, are almost identical, if in a higher degree, with those which He asks that we shall fulfil towards our brethren. “What does it avail to tell me that God’s love for me is that of father, mother, friend and spouse, all in one and carried to infinity? or to tell me that I should aspire to love Him back as father, mother, friend and spouse, if I have never given one of these affections play: never developed and purified my power of loving? In brief, it is through man alone that we can know or love God, as long as we see Him only through a glass darkly, and before we are face to face with Him.”¹

¹ G. Tyrrell, *Hard Sayings*, p. 309.

What, then, we ask, is the call of man, as he reaches upwards towards this new life? We assume that the need is felt, that there is an utterance, a cry—inarticulate though it be, and confused by sorrow and sin: a call from the deep, for something which will satisfy, to Someone Who will hear: one deep calling to another, out of the waves and storms which overwhelm.

Let us take at random one of our fellow-men who feels this need, from any passing crowd, and ask him in what spirit and with what hope he thus calls to the Unseen. He will tell us—nor shall we wonder at this—that in his mind there is utter confusion: that the whole outlook is one of waste and misery and shame, in which it seems impossible to trace the activity of any Loving Providence: that his heart is near to breaking with the sorrow and the anguish of it all: that his will has been beaten down in the struggle, till there seems nothing to strive after, nothing worthy of hope or effort, in a purposeless and forsaken world. Mind, heart, and will—confused, broken, and beaten down! How many would not make such a confession to-day? Yet there remains still the instinct which cries—Unto Thee, O God!—for something rational, consoling, and directing; for a religion which will fit in with the awful facts of life, which will give to the heart an object for its love and a response to its deepest needs, which will be of stable and permanent value, to give strength and direction to the will.

Something—some religion—which will fit the facts of life! For this the mind of man is ever calling. Here is not too difficult a starting-point. We step off, at least, from familiar ground: and, in doing so, we adopt the true method of exact inquiry, which is to work

outwards, after careful observation of fact. We may remember that, when Bishop Blougram discussed with his literary guest the reasonableness of his faith, he insisted that they should consider, in their talk,

“ . . . a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome, or London, not Fools' Paradise.”

Was not the Bishop right? For there is no task so unscientific in method, or so fruitless in result, as that of forming a conception in our minds of the world, as we think it might have been or ought to have been, and then complaining to God because our own conception of what is best does not appear to be identical with His. *Si j'étais Dieu!* This has been the cry of the world's critics from the beginning of time. Yet a moment's thought will convince us how irrational this position is. If we were God! If, in other words, we were endowed with infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love! But we are not: we can claim no single one of these qualities as our own. So that not only have we no means of conceiving what form our plans and our remedies would take, if we were the possessor of these attributes: but also, any conclusion at which we might arrive would be invalidated by the fact that we lack just those qualifications which, as we ourselves assume, constitute the essential equipment of One Whose burden it is to rule the world.

Along this path there is no progress. It were better to face the facts: not singly, in the isolation of beauty or love or suffering or horror—for all these can be found; but to see life “steadily” and to see it “whole,” and then to inquire whether or not there is to be found a religion which not only recognizes life as it is, with all its ugliness and all its beauty, but further claims to

bless and encourage all that is best in it, and to provide a solace and a remedy for all that appears to be worst.

And here we find ourselves on a well-trodden road. But those whose privilege it is to minister to human souls know that, at this time, no excuse is needed for travelling over it again, as in truth they are called to do, day by day, in their ministry. For the meaning of life and death and their eternal issues are never out of our sight to day, and the world's sorrow is beyond description. Therefore, when we have said the worst, and imagined the worst, we turn to those who are the accredited teachers of religion, and we ask them whether they have any explanation of the facts of life as they are. If these teachers are honest, they will reply that they have not: that to explain the universe is a task beyond the power of man: that in order to be able to explain (whether it be a piece of machinery or the world), it is necessary to understand: that complete understanding is impossible without complete knowledge: and that, for complete knowledge, they would require a higher order of intelligence than they can claim to possess.

But, if we are patient, they will tell us more: that they have a conception of God's love for the world to put before us, which at least fits in with the facts of life more reasonably than any other theory, or the total lack of one: that the Christian religion makes no attempt to hide the suffering of the world, to say that it does not exist, or to call it by soft names. Suffering is suffering, sorrow is sorrow, sin is sin: and it must surely be in strange moments of mental or spiritual perverseness that men and women seek refuge in any society which ignores or misnames these obvious and elementary facts. But, when we have acknowledged them all—although, be it repeated, our teachers will offer us no

explanation of them—they will place before us the two truths which alone can save the world's reason to-day, that God has shared them with us, and that He shares them now.

Let there be no doubt of this. "Has God gone mad?" was the bitter cry of an Armenian refugee in a moment of intense agony. What answer could we give, were it not for the Cross of Christ? In the Cross alone can we find light and safety to-day: there only can we learn that, if we have suffered, so has God: that if we have been in the darkness, so has God: that if we have wept at the grave of a friend, so has God: that if the weight of our own and the world's sin is indescribable, God bore it and died to save us from it.

Nor is this all. It is not enough to know that another—even God—has shared our sorrow; nor that the day will come when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying." Between the past act of redemption and the future hope of bliss, there lies that which matters most and hurts most, the present life: the sense of present, ever-present, anguish and distraction. Into this, too, God will enter, with a present balm for the suffering, a present comfort for the sorrowful, and a present strength for the sinner. *Christus Consolator!* How many have not first called Him by this name, when they have laid the sorrows of a broken heart at the foot of His Sacred Cross? "Ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"Can it be true, the grace He is declaring?
Oh, let us trust Him, for His words are fair."

Let us trust Him! For it is through trust that the spiritual consciousness is filled with hope and life: and the triumph of that consciousness has asserted itself,

in ways and on days unnumbered, over the tyranny of anguish and gloom. The Man of Sorrows rejoiced in spirit, the Angel's face shone through the martyr's blood, and through the bars of the Roman prison rang the clarion call of a consciousness which human force could neither destroy nor disturb: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."

We pass to the cry for something all-embracing, which shall respond to man's deepest need. This is the call of the heart. Of this, indeed, little needs to be said. Rather let us direct the world's heart, as we direct its mind, to the Sacred Figure of our Redeemer, and remember the saying that "if Christ had never lived, He would have had to be invented."

Whether we think of man in his social relationships, or in the struggles and ambitions of his individual life, it is true to say that Christ is not only needed, but even claimed. When human ideals diverge and human interests clash, it is the ambition of leaders on either side of the contest to point to His example and to claim His sanction for the course which they pursue. When men are banded together in a common brotherhood, to press their demands for a larger share of all the best that life has to offer, it is His words that they quote, and His message which they claim to interpret to the world. When outrages are committed, and human life and honour are held of little account, it is in His Name that they invoke the judgment of Heaven upon the guilty. When, in order to save the down-trodden and oppressed, the sword is unsheathed, he who draws it is not ashamed to call upon the Prince of Peace for His blessing and His protection in the day of battle: while by another His Name is used and

His teaching interpreted, as the sanction for refusing to draw the sword at all. A wondrous Figure, truly! And no less wonderful in the more lonely places, where man meets God alone.

For here He claims the place which is His by the world's consent. A passage in Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, in which he gives the great Napoleon's verdict on the personality of our Lord, is too well known to bear quotation: but it is the verdict of humanity. Was there ever a simpler appeal than that contained in the words—"Come unto Me"? Yet who could hope to make up the tale of those who have answered it? And for what diverse reasons! To one He appears as the Great Leader going forth conquering and to conquer; to another as the Great Teacher, unrivalled after the passing of two thousand years; to another He is the Great Reformer, denouncing injustice and hypocrisy; to another the Great Comforter, who has "borne our grief and carried our sorrows"; to yet another the only Saviour, at Whose Sacred Feet the stains of sin may be cleansed, and the penitent restored to grace.

Is there more to be said than to ask this question: Of what kind must that heart be, which can find in Him *nothing* to satisfy its needs or to respond to its love?

Once more, there is the call of the Will. And here the demand is for something stable and permanent, which shall give it direction and strength: for in the will we touch the centre of all action, the mainspring of man's being, and the source of his power. If the will be slack or uncertain, man believes nothing and achieves nothing: and this is a truth which cannot be too strongly emphasized at a time when the manifestations of

the religious instinct are frequent and varied. Would any of those who are ever watching for the outbreak of these manifestations, and attempting to guide them deny that the utmost care and the plainest teaching are necessary, if the will is to be permanently affected, if the good desires of a community and its highest aspirations—and surely these are to be found in abundance in our land to-day—are to be brought to good effect? Teachers there are in plenty; many teachers but—is it not true?—little teaching. And the plain man asks: To whom shall we go?

The answer is that God has not left Himself without witness. At the root of the matter lies the fact of Revelation, though the consideration of it has entered but little into the minds of many who are seeking guidance to-day. More than one reason could be assigned for this neglect, but one stands out with special clearness. The modern tendency to subjectivity in religion, while it has given much support to the reasonableness of prayer, meditation, and even conversion, has this fatal danger; that it seeks to find its sanction and inspiration almost entirely from within. Yet was it not truly said that “no man hath quickened his own soul”? The inward light may illuminate, but it cannot quicken. It may kindle the fire within, but who will be prepared to believe that it can ever claim more than an individual authority? The truth rather is that, the greater the variety of religious experiences, the greater will be the bewilderment of those who hope to find in them a guide to life and faith, which shall be of universal authority and application. For the measure of the exact significance of the inward light can only be gauged by the individual who claims the illumination. Who is to decide on the comparative

objective values of the fakir's self-inflicted torture, the prophecies of Joanna Southcote, or the mystic raptures of St. Catharine?

Nor is the question answered if we reply that it is obvious which of these is guided by the True Light. It is merely thrust further back, to the point at which we ask what is the purpose of these exercises, and for what are they of value. For if the object of life be the mortification of the flesh—and in the absence of any revealed theory to the contrary, the object would be considered at least a worthy one—could this be better attained than by stretching one's limbs upon a bed of nails? And the difficulty may be pressed still further if we remember that not only are the varieties of these experiences very great in the case of different devotees, but also they are almost as numerous in the case of the devotee himself. In which of his moods are we to trust him, as giving expression to the permanent relation of his soul to God? And if the selection be left in his hands, on what possible principle can it be made, which is not arbitrary or of merely passing value?

It is worthy of note, further, that this has come to affect our religious vocabulary. "All things are ours." We claim, and justly claim, to correlate our knowledge and our experiences with those of psychology and physical science. We welcome their discoveries; for what have we to fear from them?¹ But let us beware

¹ There is little doubt that a considerable number of believers are genuinely alarmed at the wonderful progress and discoveries of modern science. This is in large measure due to the negative—or, as it may be called, the "missing links"—attitude adopted in much apologetic literature. It is probable that, were a Cambridge chemist to establish beyond doubt the truth of *Abiogenesis*, or were a solution to be found of any of Du Bois-Reymond's "Seven Enigmas," many would complain that their "faith" had received a

lest, if we ask them to prove everything, they prove too much. When intercessory prayer is described as "the creation of an irresistible atmosphere of organized suggestion," there are some who would ask to be spared these terms, and to be allowed to suggest that God does come into it somewhere; who would fall back with a sense of relief on our Lord's simpler words: "Shall not God avenge His own, which cry day and night unto Him?" "Ask, and ye shall have."

Over against this subjectivity we place an objective Revelation, which tells of a God Who has shown Himself to the world; Whose "witness" we trace step by step, as we see unfolded the secrets of His work and His will, in the pages of Holy Scripture. God said, "Let there be light": He is the source of all created things. "God spake these words and said": He is the Author of the moral law. "The Lord sent me and said, Prophesy unto this people": from Him the prophets derive their message. "My Father hath sent Me": the Incarnation is the embodiment and the supreme token of God's love. "He spake as one having authority": the words were not His, but the Father's Who sent Him. "He shall teach you all things": through the Holy Spirit are His messages given to men. "If he hear not the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. . . . Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven": through the Church, the Spirit-bearing body, He speaks with authority to-day. In such wise has God revealed Himself: so does He now offer light and leading to the world. Over

severe shock. We have more reason than ever to remember the warning given long ago in *Lux Mundi*, that "people who take refuge in gaps find themselves awkwardly placed when the gaps begin to close."

against the vague conjectures and the passing theories which men may weave at the bidding of their taste or temperament, is set for ever an Authority which is absolute and a Revelation of which the value is eternal.

Now may we return to the inward light (God forbid that we should ever undervalue it, so long as we do not spell it with capital letters), because we have placed ourselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, within the sphere in which His greatest works are done. Now may the

“ Celestial Light

Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate,”

because we have recognized that He comes from without; that whatever light we have is only a reflection and a gift of the True Light; that not through any genius or psychic force of our own do we hear the Divine Voice, but because we hold fast to the promise that it is the Holy Spirit Himself Who will take of the things of Christ and show them to us, and because we believe that, if we do not grieve Him by our sin, it will be given to us to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

Have we wandered far from the demand of the will? Surely not: for only when there has been gained the clear faith in a Personal God, Who guides and controls the world and every human soul, can the will be braced to make the effort which is needed, to give direction and inspiration to life. Poverty of vision leads to indecision in action. Moral sloth is too often the result of vagueness of conviction; and the passage is but a short one from the untidy mind to the unregulated life.

Plus de conviction was the appeal of the artist, as

he went from one easel to another, among the pupils in his studio. And is it not just this which is needed by those whose wills are as yet unmoved by the religious appeal? Revelation, or rather the belief in it, can take our religious aspirations, and reveal to them their fullest meaning, their real object, and their true home. "The Lord God hath spoken. Who can but prophesy?" And who can but go forward, when he has heard the fullness of the completed Gospel, on the path of strenuous endeavour, in the strength of a consecrated will?

Such then is the call from the deep. It comes from our whole nature, mind, heart and will; and in the Christian Revelation God has given His answer to it. And here, with a full consciousness of the love with which God has led us in times past thus to call to Him, and has given to us the gracious assurance of His response, we will ask whether, in each of these respects, we are offering to Him the service which is His due.

I. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.* Apart from the daily study of the Bible, of what does our religious reading consist? Have we progressed at all in this respect? Or is it still confined (if the colloquialism may be pardoned) to "nice" books: books, that is, which we did not set out to buy, but which we "picked up" at a bookseller's because they were attractively bound and not too exacting in length, and could be carried without inconvenience in the pocket? If it be at all true that every Church has the literature which it deserves, a visit to a "religious bookseller" to-day, and an examination of the booklets which are exposed for sale, should lead us to fear that, in the offering and the love of the mind, we have grievously fallen short of the best. These are days in which the demands upon the

thought and labour of each one of us are clamorous and insistent, and unoccupied moments are few. But how much more profitable would be our Lent if we could determine to read one—it need be only one—standard book of Christian faith or practice, between Ash Wednesday and Easter Day. This would not necessarily be for the purpose of enabling us to give an account of the faith which is in us. It is true that we are “debtors to the wise”; but we need to read books because they are good books, not because they are useful. And there is one truth which certainly should not be forgotten: that there are few things which deepen and strengthen our own personal religion more than to follow carefully the unfolding, by the hand of a master, of any subject which bears upon the joys and difficulties of the Christian life, or the teaching of the Church.

2. *My son, give Me thy heart.*—Perfect detachment can be gained only by perfect surrender: and perfect surrender is only possible to those who love much. It is the heart which the lover offers, because there lie the affections which prompt the surrender, and sweeten the union between the lover and the beloved.

Not only what we offer to God, but also what we keep back from Him, tells for or against us in the spiritual life. Surrender, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, is not altogether difficult, when youth and enthusiasm are still ours. But as the years go by, and we pass into middle life or old age, do we not become aware of an ever-present danger: the danger that the longing for extra comfort and ease, the desire to avoid trifling inconveniences, the unwillingness to make fresh sacrifices, may draw our hearts away from Him to Whom once we gave them? “I have somewhat against thee

because thou hast left thy first love": could there be a sadder reproach than this? Yet even those who are striving to live very near to God need to remind themselves of this danger from time to time, lest they should be drawn back into the net from which they once escaped "as a bird out of the snare of the fowler."

So we fall again to our self-examination, and ask what it is that we are keeping back from Him Who gave all for us. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock"—words, be it remembered, spoken not to the heathen, but to a Church. "It is the voice of My Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open unto me." May we be prepared to give Him the entry to the furthest corner of our hearts, and to pray that, of His Love, He will enter, and leave us nevermore.

3. *Follow me.*—This is the appeal to the will; to follow, *and follow on*. We dare not forget that our Lord was particularly severe in His criticisms of those who began but were not able to finish. Would He spare from His censure, to-day, many baptized Christians: who remember just enough of the associations of their youth to go to Holy Communion twice or three times a year, and make little or no effort to say their prayers: whom an occasional access of excitement or sentiment will bring to Church, to hear a popular preacher or a favourite anthem: who are secretly glad when they hear of clever people who—while not denying God's existence—never attend a Church Service: who have persuaded themselves—have they really done so?—that they can "worship God just as well in the open air," by giving up to enjoyment the day which once they gave to Him? Where is the hidden weakness here? Does it not lie in the will? We may have

many of the qualities which go to make up the Christian character, and many more which render us acceptable to the world : we may be loving and humble, cultured and gentle, but without strength of character and consistency of purpose we shall achieve little in the Christian life. How many have started on that life, with convictions clear and hearts full of hope, and then, through weakness of will, have fallen in the race? Alas! The number is beyond count.

“Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure :
*Until with Thee I will one will
To do and to endure.”*

CHAPTER IV

OF HUMILITY AND PENITENCE IN PRAYER ; AND OF A NATION'S REPENTANCE

"Lord, hear my voice. Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."

THE prayers of the Old Testament are worthy of careful study ; it is almost possible to trace in them the religious development of Israel. They differ, as is to be expected, in beauty of conception and spirituality of utterance, varying more especially with the moral atmosphere from which, in part at least, they take their origin. At one time they sound the high note of hope and rise to great heights of assurance, when the suppliant casts himself wholeheartedly on the covenanted mercies of God and the belief that He will be true to His promises. At another time, we find them tainted with a despair which almost sinks to unbelief ; while at their lowest they record what is little more than an attempt, on the part of the utterer, to drive a bargain with Almighty God.

The height of their beauty, by general consent, is reached in the Psalms, in which every experience of the spiritual life is faithfully reproduced, and every utterance of the human soul finds its echo. "Lord, hear my voice." This appeal occurs again and again ; and, even if its exact significance be doubtful, it can usefully guide us to some lines of thought and contrast, on the joys as well as the difficulties of Prayer.

Is it the cry of a reverent humility, which is conscious of the great moral barrier that lies between the soul and God? Would it be in this spirit that the devout suppliant would come before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Revelation certainly had spoken with no uncertain sound of the method of approach to the Most High. It had been defined, for all time, long years back in Israel's history. "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Nor had the chosen people been left without warnings of the fate that overtakes familiarity and pride, the two sins which tempt men to deal lightly with the things of God: while the way of humble approach was commended in the assurance which was given to the prophet Daniel, "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart . . . to humble thyself before God, thy words were heard." If there had been any doubt in the prophet's mind of God's power to heal and help, the relief thus promised is immediate. It is no less permanent: the humble are always in God's Presence: "I dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite spirit."

In the mind, therefore, of the devout Jew there would always be present the felt need of this reverence in approach, and the consciousness of the barrier which separated his soul from God. The converse of this truth is to be found in that intimate confidence with which our Lord approached the Father: "Father, I know that Thou hearest me always"; for between Him and the Father there could be no such gulf as that which is fixed between even the holiest of men and an all-Holy God. The more holy God's lovers become, the more surely conscious are they of a separation—never, indeed, so wide as to create despair of access, but always distinct

enough to inspire reverence in approach. But our Lord—and in whose eyes was the Father more holy than in His?—can thus boldly speak because He knows of no such separation. He is conscious not only of His special affinity with the Father, but also of the Divine Nature within Himself. By the very instinct of that Nature His touch is sure. He can sound no false note in the approach to God.

“Lord, hear my voice”: “Father, I know that Thou hearest me always.” With the thought of this contrast in our minds, we are better able to realize the nature of the relation in which we ourselves stand to God when we pray. The barrier has, on God’s side at least, been broken down. The fear that He Whose footsteps are not known may dwell at a distance too great for human voices to penetrate, is to be put away for ever: for God has been “in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,” in the Holy Incarnation and on the Cross. Through Him Who for us men became Man, Who offered the one all-sufficient sacrifice, and now continually pleads that sacrifice in Heaven, the way to the Mercy Seat lies open: we may have “boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.” Because we are allowed to plead in His Name, the approach to the Father has become more easy. Our half-hearted and timid utterances should gain fullness and strength, because we may close them with those words which have become so familiar as almost to have lost their meaning—through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are bidden to ask in His Name: and the promise is that we shall receive, and that our joy shall be full.

But if from this we take courage, as surely we may; if we have learned that we may have confidence when we approach the Throne, it must not be forgotten that

God still remains "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy." Who would be bold enough to claim, with the memory of prayers offered hurriedly, coldly, thoughtlessly, "Father, I know that Thou hearest me always"? It is indeed a warning of which we stand in need: we are apt to speak too lightly of God *always* hearing our prayers. If we were to collect and study the passages in the Old and New Testaments which treat of Prayer, we should be left in little doubt that there are conditions, not of our choosing but imposed by God Himself, to be fulfilled, if our prayers are to be acceptable to Him. Some of these conditions will be considered in this chapter. But certainly not least, in importance as well in the method of arrangement, is the manner of approach. It should be that of complete confidence, yet of utter humility; the one urging us to increase our faith and telling of the freedom with which we His children may speak to our Heavenly Father, the other warning us of the danger of familiarity, and reminding us of the Majesty of God. Let us believe, if indeed our experience has not already led us to do so, that it is worth while, in our daily prayers, to spend a moment, before we offer our petitions, in meditating upon the solemn truth of the one, and the blessed promise of the other. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts." "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Or do the words express a fear that the suppliant may not have asked aright; that there may be some fault or weakness in the manner or the matter of the prayer, which will hinder it from being acceptable in God's sight? The beating upon the doors of heaven, the appeal that God will be attentive, is certainly

not without its parallel in those spiritual experiences which are common to us all. But do we forget how often we are, as a result, driven back to ask whether the failure to receive the reply for which we hope rests with God or with ourselves? If we would be sure that we ask aright, are there not at least three questions to which we should be able to give a clear answer?

(1) Do we seek God's will, not our own will, when we pray? Whether our prayers be offered in the spirit of brave hope or timid venture, our first thought—how easy to speak of, but how hard to fulfil!—must be of the Will of God: that Will which is centred upon each human life with loving purpose and strong desire, but waits, as only Divine patience can wait, for the co-operation of our human wills, and their assimilation to Itself. There are many petitions which we may offer with the certainty that the fulfilment of them would be in accord with the will of God: that we may learn to love Him more, that He will deliver us from the Evil One, that He will bless those whom we love; these and many such petitions we may offer in the spirit of perfect trust, because the granting of them would be in agreement with what we know to be His revealed Will. But there are other prayers which we offer, which carry us into the region where we can tell with no such certainty what may be God's Will. And here we turn to the example of our Lord, and bring back one of His prayers to our mind. Once, and once only in His Life, did this doubt enter His soul—on the night when He prayed that He might be spared the agony of the Cross. May we not reverently say that, at the moment when the prayer was offered, He realized that the granting of the release for which He asked might not be in accordance with the Father's Will, and that not until the words, "Never-

theless not as I will, but as Thou wilt," were uttered, was the prayer perfect in God's sight? Yet who would presume to say that our Lord's prayer was not answered because He was led to the Cross? So if our friends whose lives are daily in danger are taken from us, if it be God's Will that our next meeting with them should be behind the veil, we would not surely say that our prayers for them have not been heard. Nay rather, has not God, in His love, given to us the strength, not once but many times, to picture them, even as we kneel in the first awful grief of the separation, passing into the unseen world with the freshness of our prayers still upon them, and bearing the spirit of those prayers into the heavenly places? "Behold how he loved him." With these words—surely each one of us would say—may one of the heavenly host bring my loved one into the sacred Presence. Thus may he tell of the faith by which we were linked together, and of the prayers which will never cease to rise for him till my lips be closed in death, so that together, then as now, we may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Words which have perplexed many a troubled soul! Yet, as we speak of them to those whose life is an unbroken walk with God, we find that, unlike ourselves, they are not troubled by them. And if we go on to ask the reason for this unclouded faith, the saints will tell us just this: that once, long ago, they too were perplexed; but that there came a day when they ceased to wonder at the words, and began to pray them, and from that day the light broke upon their souls.

(2) Do we ask the Holy Spirit to teach us how to pray? and do we trust in His teaching? We are familiar with the somewhat dreary correspondence which

is carried on from time to time in Church newspapers on the subject of what we "may" or "may not" pray for. Without entering into that controversy, or attempting to supply an answer to the question, it is worth while to suggest that the religious instinct, under the control of the Holy Spirit, is a safe guide. It is surely difficult to conceive anything less likely to open the windows of heaven than a constantly recurring fear harassing our minds—even at the moment when we are lifting them up to God—lest we may be asking for something which would not find a place in the petitions of those who hold certain views on the subject, let us say, of the Divine Foreknowledge, or the Laws of Nature. "Become as little children." "In everything . . . let your requests be made known unto God." The child and the saint are here—as when are they not?—our surest guides. They allow, indeed, a place for everything in their prayers, with a fullness which is amazing; and in this utter simplicity they find the assurance that God will be attentive to the voice of their supplications.

Nor is the instinct left unguided and uncontrolled. The Teacher is very near at hand. "How do you teach your people to pray?" is a question often asked of one priest by another. Yet the remembrance of prayers which we have heard, uttered often by untaught or simple people, or by those who are passing through some sore trial, leaves us in little doubt that much of the work of teaching is done by God and not by man. It would be more than unjust to the many who are genuinely perplexed on this subject, to suggest that the way of prayer is free from difficulties: but how much less complex that way would be, if we were to fall back more often and more trustfully on the truth that "the

Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Large indeed is the number of those who have not only believed in, but have also claimed, this guidance, and can testify that St. Paul's experience has been their own.

(3) Can we say that the object of our prayers is always the object of our desires? "Prayer that is not dominant desire is too weak to achieve any thing."¹ Is it not here that we must often confess our failure? Dangerous friendships, secret indulgences, worldly attractions—all that we mean by the phrase "playing with fire"—how often, even while we pray to be delivered from their influence, we still hanker after them in our hearts.² Yet there is nothing more certain than that "if I incline unto wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The remedy for this deceitfulness of heart is to go deeper in our prayers, to thrust them ever backward till they reach the elemental region of desire. That God will purify our desires, that He will of His mercy make us *wish* to give up that friendship, that indulgence, that worldliness which we know to be a danger to our souls, this is a prayer which cannot but be acceptable with Him. "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein is my desire"—here is a perfect prayer. Because my desire is to walk with God and to keep His commandments, because it is the one thing above all others which I long after with my whole heart—therefore I know that I shall ask aright, if I pray that God will keep my feet on the right way. Who among the sorely tempted will not be ready to testify that not until the desires are

¹ H. E. Fosdick, *The Meaning of Prayer*, p. 149.

² Cf. the prayer of St. Augustine: "Give me chastity, but not yet."—*Confessions*, VIII, 7.

purified is the work of Grace completed in the soul : and that only when the heart is set at liberty can the human soul have its free course, to run the way of God's commandments?

Once more, may the words imply that it is the penitent especially who are assured of a hearing at the throne of Grace? The people's sin and its iniquities had separated it from God, but on behalf of the nation the Psalmist calls from the deep, and the prayer passes into a strong hope that the barrier of sin may have been removed by penitence, and that the way of approach to God is once more free.

Have we here a true description of the relation between penitence and prayer? Should they move, as it were, upon parallel lines, penitence slightly in advance of prayer, prayer following closely and faithfully, but always following and never presuming to lead? Surely the true relation is no other than this. True men of prayer are those who have followed the way of penitence : the memorials of the Sacred Passion are recited in the Day-Hours of the Church : never are our own prayers so heartfelt as when the assurance of forgiveness has been received. It is not difficult to understand why this is so. The great barrier has, in part at least, been removed : the way to the Mercy Seat, blocked by sin, is opened. We shall perhaps find less to surprise us in the constant appeal to penitence which is made in the writings of the holiest teachers, or in the custom of hanging the Crucifix or the Stations of the Cross in our Churches, if we realize that the Saints learned to pray because they learned to repent, and they would lead us along the path which they themselves have trodden ; and that if we would make our Churches houses of

Prayer, we must do all that lies in our power to make them also houses of Penitence. It is further, of the greatest practical help, when we find that our own intercessions become formal and unreal, to make, before we offer them, an Act of Penitence, by saying this Psalm which we are considering or another of the Penitential Psalms, and thus to maintain in our private prayers the true relation between these two outpourings of the soul.

An explanation may here be offered, even if it be not complete, of a difficulty which is commonly experienced at this time. The number must be considerable of men and women who are trying honestly and sincerely, to pray for those whom they love. For many years a large percentage of these have been out of touch with organized religion. They have received little previous training and teaching in some cases none. Their lack of knowledge concerning the most elementary truths of religion can only be called deplorable. Yet, led by the instinct which draws the soul to take refuge in God in the time of trouble, they earnestly wish to pray to-day. Some attend instruction services, devoutly taking their part in the prayers which are offered; yet, after a time, the comfort and satisfaction which at first they derived from them seem less real, and many have ceased to persevere. Would it not be true to say that they would have found the work of intercession easier and happier, if their penitence had kept pace with their prayers; if they had been privileged to pass through one of the necessary and normal experiences of the devout worshipper? Then they would have learned that, above all, they should ask that God would make them worthy to pray, in other words that He would give them that true repentance which opens the way to

prayer. In the public worship of our Church this order is scrupulously observed. In Morning and Evening Prayer, penitence has the first place, not only in the Exhortation and Confession, but in each one of the sentences with the reading of which the Service opens. In the Litany, the great Intercession of the Church, we begin by praying four times that God will "have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"; and it is only when we have pleaded with Him not to remember our offences, nor to take vengeance of our sins, that we lay before Him the needs of our Church and realm. Both in the Church Catechism, moreover, and in the Communion Service itself, repentance is brought to our notice as an essential condition of rightly receiving the Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood.

We dare not say that this order is accidental. It is too obvious, too emphatic, for us to dismiss it in this way. Rather let us believe that it is the true order of progress. No book of devotions is without instructions on the practical steps to be taken, if we wish to grow in penitence. What we are concerned with here is to accept it as a principle. God forbid that we should not rejoice whole-heartedly at any growth in the joy and the power of prayer which He may see fit to grant us: but all the more on that account should our penitence be deepened, for our unworthiness to receive His gifts. Then shall we live, day by day, in the fullest hope that the poverty and ignorance of our prayers may be forgiven and our requests granted, if only they spring from a penitent heart.

But wider ground must be covered, if we would be true to the spirit of this Psalm. It is national suffering and national sin of which the Psalmist tells: and

national penitence to which he is endeavouring to give expression. National Penitence—a phrase which has already proved a stumbling-block to many! It is hardly necessary to examine the false, though widespread, conceptions of penitence which confuse it either with cowardice or despondency; beyond insisting that a quality very far removed from cowardice is demanded when we lay bare our souls before God, and that joy beyond words, not despondency, is the result of the forgiveness which follows. But since the appeal to bring within the sphere of our own penitence the whole sin of the nation has presented serious difficulties to those who have no little understanding of what individual penitence means, it may be useful to consider the meaning and the scope of this corporate penitence which is demanded of us.

Let us take note of two verses from the Old Testament: "Let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, *and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.*" (Neh. i. 6.)

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, *that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*" (Jer. ix. 1).

In the first of these two verses, the mighty leader and man of action, burning with the desire to rebuild the city of his fathers, lays before God the story of His chosen people, reminds Him of the covenant and the promises made to Moses, and prays that He will look in pity on their present state. But the nation, as he sees it, is separated from God. Penitence is demanded: let

it be his to offer it. It is the people who have broken God's commandments: it shall be the people's sin which he will confess. The second cry is even more poignant. Something of the nation's sin has entered into the prophet's soul; but he prays that the iron may enter still further: that the great burden and the shame of it all may sink deep and ever deeper into his soul, so that his whole being may be saturated with the horror of the nation's vice, till it be given to him to feel a penitence which is in some sense commensurate with their sin. In each case the suppliant has identified himself with the nation to which he belongs and for which he prays. Even as he tells the full tale of their sin, he can speak of "me" and "my," not "they" and "their." No matter how great might be the conviction of personal sin in the prophet's heart, what did it avail if the nation which he loved could neither hear, nor see, nor understand? How could he be content with cleansing and peace in his own soul, so long as the people—his people, God's people—would turn a deaf ear to His Voice? Because he was a Jew, it was the sin of the Jews which he must confess. As a nation they had sinned: as a nation must they seek pardon of God.

How striking is the difference, when we turn to consider the life and faith of our own Church and nation, and how sadly we miss this corporate sense of penitence and sin. We have learned to recognize the strength of Individualism, with all its pride and glory, in the personal initiative and heroism which it has produced. And perhaps for this very reason our eyes have been blinded to its weakness, which is as real as its strength. For there is a false Individualism, which refuses to accept any but a personal responsibility,

which makes members of the same society wrongly independent one of another, which leaves them isolated, self-centred and self-contained; which passes, if unchecked, by easy stages into the cynicism of a soured middle life, and into the hopelessness of an old age that knows neither the joy of memory nor the love of a friend.

Such has been Individualism at its worst: can we thank God that the worst is over? For to-day our nation has found that "we are a people yet." Words which we have almost shrunk from using, because of their doubtful associations, come naturally and with pride to our lips to-day. And one word above all stands out with great distinctness and—may we not add?—with no less glory. National life, national honour, national service, national sacrifices, national hopes—have we at last really lost our petty selves? Have grief and horror and death brought us within sight of one good, which through plenty and contentment we could never have reached?

God grant that it may be so. But what of national penitence? Are we yet within sight of that? Surely we may say that at least we have been brought nearer to it. For we have but to transfer to the sphere of religious faith—God forgive us that it was not to be found there first of all!—that same unity, solidarity, corporate consciousness, call it what we will: and we shall be on the way to gaining the national penitence which we seek. Pride, joy, and mourning—how often, in these days, have they thrilled us or cast us down, when we played no individual part in the events which called them forth? Should it be harder for us to be humbled in penitence, and to confess the nation's sin: not only the sins for the spread of which we have been

individually responsible, either directly or indirectly—and here the range of our influence is wider than we are apt to think—but also those in which we can plead that we have had no personal share?

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” Yet there are watchers in Heaven. We will make ourselves, through the Grace of God, more penitent; we will confess each his own sin: so may we be delivered from any self-righteousness. And then, on the day when those who have left all shall confess the world’s covetousness, when the pure in heart shall confess the shame of our “towns of wasted honour,” when the saint shall confess the godlessness of the world, *and each shall include himself in the great indictment*, then shall there be joy in heaven over a repentance such as neither our Church nor our nation have known, and the Kingdom may be nigh, even at the doors.

CHAPTER V

OF THE JUDGMENTS PASSED BY CONSCIENCE, THE WORLD, AND GOD; AND OF THE MERCY OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS

"If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss,
O Lord, who may abide it? . . . With the Lord there is mercy."

"HOPES blighted, vows broken, lights quenched, warnings scorned, opportunities lost; the innocent betrayed, the young hardened . . . the just overcome, the aged failing; the sophistry of misbelief, the wilfulness of passion, the tyranny of habit, the canker of remorse, the wasting of care, the anguish of shame, the pining of disappointment, the sickness of despair; such cruel, such pitiable spectacles, such heart-rending revolting, detestable, maddening scenes . . ." ¹ These words were written many years ago, in days when the greatest horror of all was yet to come. It is an account of the world's normal sin, before ever the terrors of war had been added to the list. Little would be gained by attempting to re-write this paragraph with the history of recent years in mind. We have but to remember that the result would be a ghastly catalogue indeed.

"*To mark what is done amiss.*"—The words imply the power to discriminate and to decide; to sift and to weigh motives, thoughts, and actions; to pronounce the verdict and to execute judgment. They provoke the

¹ J. H. Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, 1st Ed. p. 359.

great question, which forces itself upon our minds as we watch the whole shame and waste of the world, whether right and wrong have any meaning which is of permanent value, whether there be any final court of appeal which can and does pronounce judgment on the world's work. And we find at the outset of the inquiry that, with hardly an exception, the first point will be conceded by all. There would be an almost universal agreement that there are things which are done amiss. The advocates of moral anarchy have never been numerous, and their influence is negligible. Cardinal Newman's list would be at least generally accepted as an accurate description of the less beautiful and the less noble side of life. It is true that any attempt to bring the disasters which he enumerates within the bounds of a narrower and inclusive category which would be agreed upon by all would fail: we must be content at present with the wide definition of "that which is done amiss."

But one point of considerable importance will have been gained. Common to all the varying standards of the world there is, even in the loosest system of life, an agreement that certain lines of action are right and that others are wrong, however curiously mixed the reasons for the distinction may be. But at this point we shall find that agreement ends: for it is when we proceed to search for the tribunal which shall fix the standards, weigh the evidence, and pronounce the judgment, that confusion at once arises, and bewildering divergencies of opinion are to be found. Yet analysis must be attempted, and a proposition such as the following would probably be challenged by few; that there are three tribunals by which man's work is judged: the tribunals of Conscience, the World, and God. Their judgments are unceasing. To a greater or less

extent they influence our motives and our actions each day that we live. We cannot escape them. The utmost we can do is to attempt to weigh and compare them, and to apportion to each the value which is its worth.

1. "If conscience had power, as it has authority," said Bishop Butler, "it would rule the world." In this sentence is summed up the strength as well as the weakness of conscience and its judgments. The authority with which it comes to us is, in its nature, the highest. The credentials which it can show are unsurpassed. For it is one of the means which God uses for the enlightenment of mankind. But its power is weakened by the fact that its application is individual, and that its exact value is determined by the varied conditions of each single life. Just as in matters of the spirit we touched on the inadequacy of the Inward Light, so here, in the moral sphere, we urge the same consideration. Each man is to be the measure of himself; to be concerned with, and to be responsible for the answer which he makes, or fails to make, to the promptings of his own moral sense. But with the knowledge of the mixed sources from which conscience springs, and of the influences unnumbered which have their share in its composition, surely it cannot bear the strain which is placed upon it by those who would make it the final court of appeal.

If we expand this a little, the force of the contention will be obvious. We were born into the world through the union of two human beings, each endowed with certain tendencies and characteristics which—it would now be generally admitted—have been, to a greater or less degree, faithfully reproduced in ourselves. While

the initiative instinct was at its strongest, while the heart and mind were passing through their most receptive stages, we lived in a certain atmosphere. We were surrounded by influences, at home and at school, which made their impression, and have left their mark upon our characters. We were taught certain standards of right and wrong which we followed, in most cases with considerable modification, during the earlier years of our life. Before our school days were over, we had begun to learn the meaning of independence—of body, mind, and soul—and soon afterwards we arrived at the age when, as we say, we claimed the right to think for ourselves.

Now if we imagine all the above conditions to have been most favorable; if it has been our fortune, like that on the part of parents, teachers, companions, and priests alike, we have been subjected to none but the best influences, if further we could claim that we have been faithful to them all then indeed we could do little better than to obey the dictates of our conscience, which, in its complete control over the springs of action, and in the authority of its commands, would constitute for us an "aboriginal Vicar of Christ." But with the experiences of life behind us, we can draw a very different picture. These must come before our minds, the memory of many lives, which have been begun and continued under influences as unlike as possible to those mentioned. And we are entitled to wonder of what value would be the authority of this Fickle Mentor, whose source in these cases would in large measure be traced to the terrible influences of an unhappy home, inefficient or godless parents, a bad school, evil companions and an inherited tendency to self-indulgence and vice. For let it not be forgotten that there is a strange atrophy

of the moral sense, which expresses itself most frequently in the conviction that the agent does not "see any harm in" a certain course of conduct; and it is only by a very superficial judgment that this point of view can be condemned as the outcome of deliberate hypocrisy and untruth. It is more than possible that the excuse is urged with at least a considerable amount of sincerity, that the moral sense expresses no censure on the line of conduct pursued, and that the voice of conscience sounds no warning note.

Further, if we leave this contrast on one side, and consider only those whose consciences can be trusted most—those, that is, who have been surrounded by blessings and have taken full advantage of them—even here we find ourselves on ground which is only to a small degree safer: for we are faced with another danger, different indeed in kind but no less serious, that of confusing the voice of conscience with the Voice of God. Sometimes, in the teaching and preaching to which we submit ourselves, this confusion is apparent. But only, surely, in the case of the Perfect Life can these two voices be considered as one. In no sense, be it noted, is the truth denied that God does speak through conscience to the individual soul. But who can claim that those promptings of the Holy Spirit have been at once and explicitly obeyed? Let us call to mind, in this connexion, words which lay down clearly and with accuracy the conditions on which conscience can be considered as a perfect guide to action.

"And I will place within them as a guide
My umpire Conscience: whom if they will hear,
Light after light well used they shall attain,
And to the end persisting safe arrive."

"If they will hear"—"well used": these are the

words on which the emphasis should be laid: the ear ever open to hear, the heart ever ready to receive, and the will ever ready to act upon, the directions of their guide. Hard conditions indeed to fulfil! The more immediate the obedience and the more marked the perseverance, the greater becomes the value of conscience and its power. Only, however, when we find that its constituent elements have become less diverse, and its sources less tainted, shall we be able to admit the claim of the individual conscience to be the supreme guide of life, and the court to which we look for certain judgment.

2. Little more to be relied on is the judgment of the world. For here, to mark what is done amiss with any degree of justice or wisdom is impossible, owing to the lack of the two qualities essential for pronouncing a right judgment—knowledge and authority. We should admit that extensive knowledge is needed if we consider ourselves in the position of the judge, and pass our verdict on the world: and, if we place ourselves in the dock, and allow the judgments of the world to affect ourselves, we have a right to ask the world to show its credentials before we submit to the verdict.

In considering the first of these two cases, may we not look upon it as a truth which even a limited experience of our fellow-men will endorse, that we are not sufficiently equipped by Nature for the task? Were we gifted with more than human insight and sympathy, it might perhaps be attempted. But we have come to see clearly how fallible is human judgment, because human knowledge is no less so. Can we not remember moments of penitence, which have followed on the

discovery that we had harboured suspicions for which there was no foundation in fact, or that we had attributed to others motives which in truth had no share in deciding their course of action? How often, when our ignorance has been greatest, have we not pronounced the most facile and stern judgments? "Never let it be forgotten"—and these are words to weigh—"that there is scarcely a single moral action of a single man, of which other men can have such a knowledge, in its ultimate grounds, its surrounding incidents, and the real determining causes of its merits, as to warrant their pronouncing a conclusive judgment upon it."¹ Many are the moments of shame and regret which we might have been spared, if we had believed and made our own the truth which is expressed in these words.

If, on the other hand, we place ourselves in the dock, and let the world pass judgment upon us, we have a right to ask—by what authority? What is the standard by which the world is guided in pronouncing its verdict? When we realize that the world's standards are founded on the world's conventions, we see that here we are dealing with something even less absolute, and certainly less intelligible, than we were faced with in the case of conscience: though alas! the verdicts of convention would appear to be more binding on the majority of mankind. For the truth is that water can never rise above its own level: that the standards of the world are frankly selfish and utilitarian: and that its judgments can never reach a greater height than that on which public opinion and convention sit enthroned side by side. Large indeed is the number of those who bow themselves down in the house of Rimmon: for the influence of convention

¹ W. E. Gladstone : *Life*, Vol. III, p. 549.

is second to no other in the world. The young court it, from a desire to appear middle-aged ; the old bow down to it, from a dread of being considered old-fashioned. The profligate points to it in justification of his excesses, the weak urges it as an excuse for his want of courage. The Press, with a few honourable exceptions, voices it deliberately and of set purpose : for it is the guide to life which the average man has chosen, and he must have no higher standard set before him than that which he has set before himself. It is convention which labels it a breach of honour to cheat at cards, and leaves many a sharp practice in "business" outside the range of its condemnation : which (if a commonplace illustration may be forgiven) regards it as a sign of ill-breeding not to raise one's hat to a lady, yet scoffs at the higher chivalry which would bring every woman within reach of its protection. In the name of all tyrants, was ever tyranny like this in the world before ?

" Ah, God ! for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
For ever and ever by,"

like St. Paul, let us say : facing the world with its petty standards and its miserable conventions ; conscious, as he ever was, of the only judgment that matters : and crying, as he did to the Corinthians of old : " With me it is a very small thing "—was ever irony more gentle ?—" that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

Yet does man's reason demand that there should be some standard by which his life is to be lived ; and that, if he be responsible, *i.e.* answerable, for that life, there must be one to whom he is responsible—to whom he must answer—or words have lost their meaning.

3. Let us complete the quotation from St. Paul: "He that judgeth me is the Lord." And with this we will couple another text, a saying of one who certainly had little sympathy with St. Paul's theology, except perhaps as much of it as Calvin accepted. Mr. Froude has told us how Thomas Carlyle gave it as his opinion that "scientific accountings for the moral sense were all moonshine. Right and wrong, in all things great and small, had been ruled eternally by the Power that made us." In other words, we are responsible to Him by Whom the moral law was given; Who alone has a knowledge which is absolute and an authority higher than that of any who are in the earth. The Law which was given amid the thunders of Sinai was the natural sequel to the Creation. "The Power that made us"—He only that made the ear could hear, and He only that made the eye could see, with a discernment that was infallible. Made in God's image, to God man would be responsible. The Author of all Life would at least claim this, that the judgment of each human life should remain in the Hands of Him Who gave it, and that, when man had laid down his life and the dust had returned to the earth, to Him that life should be restored. Thus there grew, with the growth of religious thought, the conviction that, inasmuch as the standards of right and wrong had been fixed by God, to sin was not to sin against those standards, but against Him Who gave them. From the temptation of Joseph to the cry of the penitent in the fifty-first Psalm, we see the ever-quickenings conscience becoming more and more certain of this truth. Moreover the law-giver, the historians, and the prophets of the chosen people, were never weary of pleading that Israel should believe this also of its national sins. Rebellion against their God-

given laws and their God-guided destiny was rebellion against God: good and evil were simply good and evil in His sight: there was no nation to whom God had been so near in providence. Would He be near them also in the Judgment?

And now the inquiry is extended. If it be God by Whom right and wrong have been ruled eternally, if it be God alone Who by His Nature, as well as by His authority and His knowledge, is qualified to be our Judge, what is the character of His judgments, and in what manner are they pronounced? The answer to the first question is given in the words at the head of this chapter. God's judgments are just, for they are pronounced on what is done amiss. Yet His justice is tempered with mercy. If He were to be extreme to mark, who indeed could abide it? But with the Lord there is mercy. To the second question the answer is that there are three ways in which God pronounces or will pronounce His judgments: in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the daily judgment which He passes on our lives, and in the judgment to come of the quick and the dead.

Of the three judgments, there are two of which we can speak with certainty, and in both of them we can trace Divine justice and Divine mercy working, if we may so speak, hand in hand. Of the third judgment, we know nothing as yet, except that God's character cannot change, and our hope is that, when all things come to an end, if justice will remain, so also will mercy. Let us consider these three judgments.

In the Crucifixion of Christ, God passed His judgment on the world's sin. Of all the messages which mankind has received from our Redeemer's Cross,

surely none is more terrible than this, that He Who knew no sin was "made to be sin on our behalf." Here could a world see not only its own sin, but how that sin appeared in the sight of God; not only the result of its sin, but also God's judgment upon it. Yet even in this sternest of all judgments, there is mercy as well as justice. Who, indeed, could have abided it, if in God's greatest judgment Eternal Justice had been separated from Eternal Love? For, if we may presume to think of them apart, what was demanded by justice? What would have been the "extreme" penalty? Either extinction, or that we should be left to die in our sins: either that man should be blotted out from off the face of the earth, or that he should live to fulfil, in a world emptied of God, the destiny which in his own self-will he had chosen.

There are some lines in the *Paradise Lost* which are worthy of quotation in this connexion. It is possible that one or two of the phrases may jar upon our ears, and some of the thoughts we should have expressed differently: but they serve to illustrate the point which we are examining.

"Man disobeying,
Disloyal, breaks his fealty, and sins
Against the high supremacy of Heaven,
Affecting Godhead, and, so losing all,
To expiate his treason hath naught left,
But, to destruction sacred and devote,
He with his whole posterity must die,
Die he or justice must; unless for him
Some other, able and as willing, pay
The rigid satisfaction, death for death.
Say, Heavenly Powers, *where shall we find such love?*
Which of ye will be mortal, to redeem
Man's mortal crime, and just the unjust to save?
Dwells in all heaven charity so dear?"¹

¹ Book III. l. 203.

We should rightly wish to modify the conception of the Atonement involved in the words, "pay the rigid satisfaction, death for death." But, with this exception, do not these lines show us how justice and love have worked together for the world's salvation? Where justice might have destroyed, love has redeemed. For ever, upon the judgment seat of the world, are set Eternal Justice and Eternal Love. Even as these two once shone out of the darkness of Calvary, so do they look down upon the world to-day.

To-day—for God's judgments are passed daily upon our lives. This is their second manifestation. Of this we can speak from our own knowledge; we know His judgments, because we know His Will. If we have submitted our conscience to the complete control of the Holy Spirit, we need but humility and faith to be shown what that Will is: and if by our own wilfulness the voice of conscience has been stilled, there is the unchanging moral law of the Christ life, independent of all human weakness and sin, in which God's Will was expressed once and for all. We know further what is the result of breaking that law: it is that judgment and condemnation must fall upon us. Not by any arbitrary or occasional punishments, but by the normal working of God's unalterable decrees, is our judgment pronounced. "The world's history is the world's judgment." It is His judgment upon the worldly that they find themselves being drawn ever deeper into the whirlpool of the world which they have refused to renounce, yet would be free from its chains: it is His judgment upon the covetous that their heart should be hardened, till there be found no place in it for God or friend or love; upon the uncharitable, that they should become blind to all that is best in their fellow-men; upon the vicious,

that the only pleasures they have known should grow flat and unprofitable with their growing years ; upon the proud, that they should find the humble preferred before them ; and upon the ambitious, that they should come to see the vanity of their desires. Such are God's laws (Rev. xxii. 11), and such is His judgment upon those who break them : and if there be any who still wonder whether this is true, let them remember the last and bitterest cry of the profligate—"Hell has begun for me already," and hear in that cry the answer to their doubt.

Yet, we can give thanks that, side by side with this law of justice, we have known the working of the infinite mercy of God. What should we look for if God had been extreme to mark what is done amiss? We dare not think. But sometimes, in the stillness, let us go back on the days that are past. Wayward and unheeding have we been in God's sight. Little love have we shown for Him and for the Way of the Sacred Cross along which He would ever lead us. Yet, even when we thought we had forsaken Him, we found Him at our side. When He might have left us to follow the way of our own choosing, He never passed from our life, but gave us blessings beyond count, the tokens of His Presence with us : His own love which never left us ; the warnings which saved, and the promptings which led ; the friends, the sorrow, the joy, in which we found Him ; the strength given according to our need ; the light in the darkness of temptation and despair : such are the benefits which He hath done unto us. Truly, the Lord is gracious, His mercy is everlasting.

What of the third—and last—Judgment? We will only touch upon it here from the point of view which we are considering. Justice we shall find : else should

we not find God. But what of mercy in that day? If—nay, because—God cannot be untrue to Himself, He will be merciful. This is our hope; and to-day, if ever, we clasp it to our hearts. For of whom do we chiefly think—many of them with only one, the last, Judgment before them? May the earth lie light upon the bodies from which they are parted! But what of themselves? Let an answer be given in these words of the present Bishop of Oxford: “I believe that our Lord Who said, ‘Greater Love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,’ has that in all those who lay down their life for their country which He can lay hold of; and, in the unknown world beyond the grave, I believe He can take hold of that spirit of sacrifice, and so purge and cleanse and reform the whole nature, as that those who die for their country shall stand at last among the spirits of just men made perfect.”

CHAPTER VI

OF THE SPIRIT OF HOLY FEAR

“There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.”

IT may seem strange to us, as we read these words, that the Psalmist should have chosen forgiveness, as the one part of God's loving dispensation which is to inspire mankind with the fear of Him. Power and might, we would say on first thoughts, would be more likely to produce this effect than forgiveness. It is these qualities which, if used in certain directions, we have learned to fear in our fellow-men: whereas forgiveness, as we know it, has filled us rather with the spirit of love and gratitude. What, we ask, is there to fear, if all can be forgiven? Why should we dread the anger of Him Who is so gentle with our faults that He can blot out the past as though it had never been? Yet the words are clear. Because God can and does forgive, we are bidden to fear Him.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The “modern man” would beg leave to doubt whether, in the quest for wisdom, the things of the Lord are needed at all: and even if he were prepared to admit the reality of some of the relations in which man stands to God, the last which he would include in his list would be that of fear. Yet may we not lay down some such proposition as the following for consideration? If it be universally admitted that, wherever the religious

consciousness is found, either in process of development or fully developed, one element has never been lacking, but persistently appears and reappears both in the lower and higher forms of religious faith, it is not unreasonable to conclude that this element plays an important, if not a necessary, part in the true adjustment of man's relations to God. Some of the ways by which these relations are expressed have been discarded with the enlightenment of the spiritual consciousness and of our conception of the character of God. We no longer, for instance, think of God as smelling the sweet savour of an offering, and coming down to partake of it with the giver. We no longer consider our duty towards Him to be satisfied if we offer "thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil." Mankind has come to learn that there are other and better ways of offering Him the sacrifice which is His due, and of carrying out that part of our duty towards Him of which these customs were the expression. But with the fear of God it is otherwise. Those who have made a study of the history and development of religious faith assure us that "an element of fear or misgiving has always been recognized to be of the essence of religion as historically manifested."¹ We meet with it at the beginning of the inquiry, it still faces us at the end; it is one of the accompaniments of religious faith which it is impossible to disregard or deny; so that the consideration of it is of interest not only to the religious historian, but to all who are striving to serve God to-day. We will attempt to trace a little of the history of this fear of God in the religious development of mankind, and then pass to the inquiry: To what extent and in what manner should it enter into our own religious faith and practice?

¹ R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, p. 198.

What do we mean by the sensation of fear? It is connected in our minds, in a large measure, with the idea of violence: something exactly the opposite of that courage which is felt by the soldier in the day of battle, in the spirit of which he is able to face physical violence, wounds, even death, without flinching and without flight. But there is another kind of fear, which to a greater or less extent has formed part of the experience of every life, the fear of the unknown; which is common to the child crying in the dark and the saint stretched on his death-bed, and is felt whenever we allow our minds to wander over unexplored regions, whether of mere anticipation, or of thought, speculation, and faith. It is clearly in the second of these two categories that we must place the fear of God; and this further proposition may be laid down: that as, in the history of religious development, the knowledge of God increases, so is the fear of Him guided, and in part corrected, by other conceptions; but never so completely as to warrant our discarding it altogether as part of our duty towards Him.

Let us begin at the beginning. To the savage God is a Being Who must be propitiated and appeased. His power is exercised in a purely arbitrary manner—

“As it likes me each time, I do : *so He.*”

It may be His fancy to kill or keep alive, to destroy or to preserve. His anger is manifested in the violence of Nature, in outbursts of wind or thunder or storm. He is the tyrant of the skies; and, like all tyrants, He can be cajoled by the bribery or flattery or obsequiousness of His subjects. In this stage of religious development there is to be found little else save the element of fear. But when we come to the beginnings of Revelation a

significant contrast is to be observed. In the days of man's innocency we hear no word of this sense of fear. "They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Intercourse with God is free and unrestricted : He is no longer the tyrant Who is to be appeased ; He is the Creator Who is to be obeyed. But when through disobedience sin has entered in, the first confession which God hears is, "I was afraid." From that day the fear of God is to be recognized as inseparable from our fallen state.

In the giving of the Law, a further stage is reached. The knowledge of God is growing, as step by step He reveals Himself to His chosen people. If Israel has known Him, is the question now asked, why should Israel fear Him? "Behold," they say, "the Lord our God hath shewed us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire : we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die?" But he who had seen God face to face, to whom God had spoken "as a man speaketh unto his friend," is the first to check this presumption. "Oh that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me" is the reply of Israel's God. "Beware," cries the lawgiver, "lest thou forget . . . Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God." Yet this is not all ; for on that day a new commandment is for the first time in their history imposed upon the people. "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God." Henceforth the fear of God is to be supplemented and softened by the newly revealed command to love Him : and the two are from that day inseparable.

So it is that throughout the Old Testament these two appeals continually recur. Sometimes, as in the pleadings of Hosea, the appeal of love is emphasized : more

often, as in the denunciations of Jeremiah, the command to fear is sternly repeated. But neither of them is ever entirely forgotten: in the teaching of the religious leaders of Israel, it was impossible that they should be thought of the one apart from the other.

We reach the time when the fullest knowledge of God was to be revealed to the world. And here, if we have borne in mind that it is the unknown which chiefly causes men to fear, we should expect to find that, in the good news that God had come to dwell with men, there would be little which should cause men to be afraid. Nor are we disappointed. Three times in the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, we read the record of a supernatural visitation: and three times the preface to the message is the same. To the aged priest standing at the Altar, who had prayed that a son might be born to him, the angel announces that he is to be the father of the prophet of the Highest; and the message is: "*Fear not*, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard." To Mary of Nazareth, blessed among women for evermore—troubled and wondering "what manner of salutation this should be"—the assurance of the unspeakable honour of her calling is given in the same words: "*Fear not*, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God." The shepherds, feeding their flocks by night—sore afraid and dazed with the light from heaven—to whom the first news of the Holy Incarnation is given, are bidden to rejoice in the message which will thrill the world's heart for ever: "*Fear not*, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Be not afraid: God is now revealed as Love: Love Incarnate and Supreme.

Yet, in His teaching, our Lord sounds a warning note. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart,

with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Here is, truly, the first and great commandment. Never can it be superseded or qualified. But this is not all. When our Lord had urged upon His disciples the need of proclaiming the Gospel upon the housetops, He warned them that they would meet with opposition. Yet they were to take heart, and to remember that those were not worthy of their fear who would persecute them : there was One only Whom they need fear. But let us quote the words of the Gospel : "And I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you Whom ye shall fear : fear Him Which after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell : yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

Thus does our Lord warn us, even while He tells of the need of love as the first and great commandment, of the danger of forgetting the fear of God. Certainly it is no longer the abject fear of slaves, but the loving fear of sons, which is to possess our souls. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry Abba, Father." It is true that some devout writers have taught that the spirit of servile fear can never entirely be put away, so long as we are in the flesh. St. Francis de Sales, for instance, writes quaintly : "As he who gives a pomegranate gives it obviously for the seed and juice which it contains, but has also to give the skin as a necessary part of it, so, although the Holy Spirit amongst His sacred gifts bestows the gift of loving fear on the souls which are His, so that they may piously fear God as their Father and their Spouse, yet does He not fail to give them also servile and mercenary fear as an accessory to the other more excellent gift. Thus Joseph, sending to his father many loads of all the riches of

Egypt, gave him not only the treasures but also the asses that carried them. . . . Mercenary and servile fear is very essential for this mortal life.”¹ But it is probable that St. Paul expressed more truly the mind of Christ, when he wrote: “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption. . . . The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God . . .” The bondage of the old fear, St. Paul teaches—that of a slave who fears the lash of his master’s whip—was relaxed for ever, by the Incarnation. The child of God is no more a servant, but a son. Yet, because we are sons, the filial fear must remain; the fear of losing a Father’s love, of not corresponding to His expectations, of not using rightly the life which He has given.

What, then, it may be asked, of the words, “There is no fear in love”? Let us read on. The words which follow are, “Perfect love casteth out fear.” But when will love be perfect? We know it here—weak and ineffectual: ever attempting to reach out and to aspire, yet ever held back and bound to earth by our selfishness and our sin; dependent upon a thousand moods, at the mercy of a thousand fancies; cold, fickle, and uncertain. May we hope that the day will ever come when love shall be made perfect, and there shall be no more fear? Once more, we return to the point from which we set out; love will be perfect when knowledge is perfect, and not before. Those who love God most are the first to assure us that perfect love is impossible while we are still in the flesh. And the reason is not far to seek: it is that we know in part. Let the lover of God attempt to bring together in imagination all the attributes which he has learnt, by revelation

¹ *On the Love of God*, Book II, ch. 9.

and experience, to associate with His Name. Let him try to picture Love and Goodness, Holiness and Power, Purity and Truth, Glory and Light, radiating from the One Personality—the task is beyond the imagination of any. But we cherish, with the joy of a great longing, the faith that the day will come when we shall know, even as also we are known. On that day, many barriers will be broken down. The vision will be complete. Love and knowledge alike will be made perfect. There will be no place for fear.

We pass on to examine the relation which this fear of God bears to the other experiences of the spiritual life. If we attempt to isolate it, to consider it by itself, we shall find ourselves left destitute of the possibility of giving expression to it: for it is so subtly woven into the whole fabric of our soul's life that some may feel genuinely disturbed because it appears, in their own case, to have formed no part of that life, while others may rest content in the conviction that they have no need for it, because it has not hitherto been experienced as a distinct expression of the soul's activity. Yet its connexion is very close with at least two vital elements in faith and character.

The first of these is forgiveness. "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." God forgives in order that men may fear. And forgiveness is meaningless, unless sin be a reality. God has marked and does mark what is done amiss, and the fear of God begins at a point farther back than the forgiveness which He offers: it begins, or should begin, with the thought of the sin for which forgiveness is needed. We can abide the wrath of God only because He forgives: yet how small is the number of those who

remember and fear that wrath, when sin is committed, before the thought of forgiveness or of the need for it has crossed their minds.

The wrath of God! Almost before the words have left our lips, we expect to be met with the taunt that the idea of an angry God is connected with a theological system which the world has long outgrown, or that it is suggestive of the God of Calvin rather than the God of Christ, Who told us that God is Love. It is true that by the supporters of some religious systems this attribute of God would meet with scant acceptance. But it is worth while to inquire whether—in some systems of religion—there remain any attributes of God at all. If the doctrine of God's immanence be isolated from that of His transcendence, and if that isolation be pressed to the extent to which some would carry it, the Personality of God disappears, and there is no place whatever for a Supreme Moral Power in the Universe. It is not only the wrath of God, but also His Power, His Holiness, His Love—all His attributes—which are in danger of being lost in a cloud of words and phrases to-day. And would it not have helped *Mr. Britling* to have sat under the Gifford Lecturer who, at the beginning of his course, laid down this clear proposition? "When I speak of God, I mean something other than an Identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which it somehow holds in solution. I mean a God Whom men can love, a God to Whom men can pray, Who takes sides, Who has purposes and preferences, Whose attributes, howsoever conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created"¹:

¹ A. J. Balfour, *Theism and Humanism*, p. 21.

the object of this very clear statement being, it would seem, not necessarily to describe the conception of God's Personality which was held by the lecturer himself, but to insist that no other kind of God was worthy of discussion, still less—may we not add?—of worship. If every attempt which is made to describe, under the limitations of human language, the character of God be merely labelled anthropomorphism and at once dismissed, we shall be left with a God towards Whom any approach on our part would be both meaningless and unnecessary.

But if it be granted that we are not degrading God, when we attempt in human language to describe His Nature, the question will still remain whether a God of Love can also be a God of Wrath. Certainly, if anger be merely the outcome of a fitful ill-temper (which, alas! it is with many), then we should indeed be doing God great dishonour if we were to associate any such attribute with His character. But if it be the expression of a righteous disapproval (as we find it manifested in the life of our Blessed Lord), then it is hard to see how a loving and a Holy God can be true to His Nature if He has never felt that disapproval, when He sees the havoc wrought in the world which He made so fair.

Yet He can forgive: but He forgives, not that men may think lightly of their sins, but that they may still fear Him. For how unspeakably wonderful is this truth of God's forgiveness! If the contention which has often been put forward that Christianity stands or falls by its doctrine of forgiveness be a true one, we do indeed at this point touch something which is vital. Forgiveness stands apart, alone. Any analogies to it which we may draw from other departments of human knowledge or experience are found, on reflection, to be inadequate.

Yet it is here with us—a living, working truth; an experience which has been shared by millions; a conviction, the reality of which it would be absurd to deny or to explain away; as obvious as the sin which has made it necessary, and as real as the Love that can make it possible. That God can give us the sense of guilt, of alienation, when we have sinned, is something for which we should never cease to thank Him. That He can as truly remove that sense of guilt, that He can forgive us again and again, should cause us to feel not only thanksgiving, but fear.

Would it seem crude to express this truth in the single sentence that a God who can forgive can do anything? Behind the Love which bids the sinner be of good cheer and arise, there is the Power which can thus pronounce Its infallible decree. If God can forgive, He also can retain. If He can grant His pardon, it is in His power no less to withhold it. And further, when we have come to know the means by which it pleased God to make forgiveness possible for us, still more shall we realize the need of Holy Fear. We cannot picture, in all its terrible details, the scene of the Crucifixion, but we know the effect it had upon some of those who stood by. They "feared greatly," and one of them said, "Truly this was the Son of God." And because He died that we might be forgiven, the pardon which is bestowed upon us can never be separated, in our minds, from that scene. The Hand that is raised to bestow the Blessing of Forgiveness is a pierced Hand. We cannot dissociate the joy of Absolution from the fearfulness of Calvary. The warning of St. Peter is surely clear on this point: "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of Christ."

There is, in the second place, an element of fear in all true worship. Worship, with all that it implies of the highest adoration, is to be found nowhere but in the sphere of Religion. Love and thanksgiving, praise and penitence, these find their expression from time to time in our relations with our fellow-men. But at the moment when we begin to draw near to God, a fresh need makes itself felt, and a new demand is made upon us: that we should attempt, however imperfectly, to realize and meditate upon God, in His Majesty, His Holiness, and His Purity; and to adore Him simply for what He is. It is the attempt that we make outwardly to express these feelings which lies at the root of the idea of worship. If our worship be that which the Father seeks, the spirit of Holy Fear—quite unconsciously it may be, but none the less truly—enters in. The God Who is great enough to worship, is also great enough to fear.

“Oh! how I fear Thee, living God,
With deepest, tenderest fears:
And worship Thee with trembling hope,
And penitential tears.”

Who is not conscious of the danger, at the present time, that worship may lose its rightful place in Religion? Whether it be due to differences of temperament, or training, or to the many efforts—some of them entirely praiseworthy—which are being made to familiarize the people of our country with some of the truths of the Christian Faith, it is difficult to tell: but the fact remains that two distinct conceptions of the character and function of religion are prevalent in England to-day; and they are tending to divide Christians into two camps, which we may roughly describe as those of Worshipers and Followers. A return will be made to this important subject in the next chapter. Here let it suffice to say

that the spirit of Holy Fear can never be felt in the life which has not known the meaning of worship : and to give an instance of the lack of this sense of worship in our modern view of religion.

The following is an account of a Sunday's worship, recently contributed by a correspondent to a weekly newspaper. "Last night I strolled into a chapel to hear a sermon which would make me feel contented and at ease." There is nothing to render the sentence particularly worthy of record, except perhaps this : that it would have been impossible to make a more suitable selection of phrases, in which to describe the prevalent conception of the function of religion, and the general attitude of the worshipper. In the implication that the writer happened to pass the chapel, and (having nothing better to do) turned idly into the building ; that the sole object of his entry was to hear a sermon ; that the sermon must have no other effect, if it were to meet with his approval, than that of making him entirely self-satisfied—have we not here an accurate description of modern religion at its worst ? For we remember those who joined the great congregation in another spirit than this. "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the House of the Lord"—here is the true spirit in which to enter God's House. "O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker"—this is the true object of worship. "In Thy fear will I worship towards Thy Holy Temple"—such is the attitude of the true worshipper. Is there any doubt which of the two is a service acceptable in God's sight ?

It may be remarked further that this spirit of Holy Fear can have an influence which extends far beyond the individual worshipper : for to every member of a congregation is given an opportunity of spreading this spirit in

a church. Who does not know the marked difference between the atmospheres which are felt on entering our English churches? Into one we may pass without experiencing the slightest feeling of awe or reverence. Had we entered a concert hall our feelings would only have been slightly different. In another, even as we pass through the doors, we feel tempted to whisper, "This is none other than the House of God." Instinctively our talking is hushed: to be anything but reverent would seem an intrusion of the worst kind. What is the reason? It is surely nothing but this: that in the one case the congregation has been accustomed to slipshod habits of worship, to avoid the posture of kneeling, to spend the moments before the service begins in whispering and gazing at their fellow-worshippers, and to re-open their conversation after the service, almost before they have passed through the doors of the church: while, in the other case, they have been led by the priests who minister to them the Word and Sacraments—and here the force of example is great indeed—to believe that in fear are they to worship towards God's Holy Temple; that it is the House of Prayer wherein they have met, that God is there to greet them, and that reverence for the things of God is an essential element in all devout worship. Let it be not thought that this is a matter of little importance. There is nothing so infectious as the spirit of worship: it is felt instinctively, especially by those who do not often attend church services: and it is these last especially who, although they come at first as strangers, will quickly recognize the quiet atmosphere of devotion and peace for which their tired and tempted souls are seeking, and may for that reason be led eventually to make the church their home.

But it were best to kneel, as we meditate upon this verse: to think, upon our knees, of the sin of the world as it is in God's sight: and, while we wonder at the love which can forgive and forgive again, to let our thoughts pass into this prayer: that alike in the hatefulness of sin, in the blessedness of forgiveness, and in the joy of worship, we may be filled with the spirit of Holy Fear.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE DESIRE FOR GOD; AND OF PERSONAL FAITH IN OUR SAVIOUR

"I look for the Lord."

WE considered, in an earlier chapter, how the needs of man's whole nature were satisfied by a belief in the Christian Revelation. To this it should now be added that, if the union between God and the human soul is to be truly founded and rightly maintained, an essential feature in that union, on the side of man, must be the Desire for God. As, in the case of prayer, it was laid down that the truest prayers are those of our desires, so, in the relation between God and the soul, God can never be truly ours until we desire Him. "I look for the Lord." "Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for." "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God."

What will not man do or suffer for the fulfilment of desire? In love and longing, in hatred and ambition, is to be found the source of the best and the worst in the world's history. The sufferings which the lover will bear on behalf of the beloved, the industry and perseverance which the ambitious will display in attaining their goal, have been for long a familiar background in history and fiction: while the mortification and self-denial which the soul is prepared to undergo, if only the God of its desire can be found and kept, are chronicled

in the lives of the Saints. That which we most strongly desire is that which matters most ; and in the fulfilment of desire lies the glory of life. Whatever the end be, something at least is achieved when the goal is reached. It only remains for us to have a care that the things which we long for are the worthiest and the best ; so that, when the object of our desire is reached, we may find that it is worthy of the effort and struggle of a lifetime. Therefore, in a world of misdirected aims and ambitions, the lover of God will point to Him as the true end of human desire—to God Who made us for Himself, without Whom life is indeed incomplete, Who gives the best reward, which is Himself, to those who long after Him with their whole heart. Let us attempt to understand in what this desire for God consists, and why it is the best which life can offer to us.

The desire for God is a personal one. It is the desire for union with a living Person, Who alone can purify our longings and inspire our lives. Can there be any danger of exaggeration, if we suggest that this is the primary object, as it is one of the first results, of our religious faith, that it should unite us to God and to the living Christ? For herein lies its compelling power. Is it possible to find any theory or system which can make an appeal so attracting and a demand so constraining as those which are founded on personal love? We may elaborate for ourselves a way of life, we may advocate the purest ethical system which it is possible to conceive : but when the demand is made that life should be guided according to the principles inculcated in that system, the prospect seems dreary and uninviting. Is not the plea put forward, with a wearisome monotony, that the fascination of goodness in itself is not great,

and that the life of unregulated pleasure is more attractive? It is useless to answer that sin is not pleasant, because such a reply would not be true. The pleasures of sin are great: they have their limitations, but there is a certain wild intoxication to be derived from them, the attraction of which it is impossible to deny. Rather let us say that we have something to offer of which the attraction is greater and nobler: that the intoxication of sin is as nothing compared with the unspeakable joy which is given to those who make Christ their own. Then will the true life appear in a different light: it will no longer be a heart-breaking search after goodness to which we can never attain: it will be seen as the answer to a personal appeal, as love given for and responding to love, uniting two hearts and two wills in the intimacy of a realized union. What, then, are the steps by which this union is attained?

It has its foundation in an act of Faith.¹ "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." It is little to be wondered at that the Personality of our Lord remains one of the central points of religious controversy. The discoveries of Science, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the barren disputes on the subject of Freewill, these all come to the fore in their turn: but, outstripping them all in importance, there remains and recurs the question: "What think ye of Christ?" Upon our conception of His Personality depends the very life of our faith.

We shall see that this point was emphasized from the very beginning, if we glance at our Lord's own teaching, and at the history of the early days of the Church. This

¹ It should not be necessary to point out that Faith, in the theological sense, is never opposed to Reason, but always to Sight. The frequent misuse of the word perhaps makes it desirable to emphasize this, especially in the present context. (*Cf.* 2 Cor. v. 7.)

is not the moment at which to inquire whether those who lived most nearly in point of time to our Lord are to be reckoned as better interpreters of His life and teaching than we are to-day: whether the record of an insight gained by personal contact and attachment is of greater evidential or practical value than the detached criticism of a more enlightened age. But it will at least be granted that we have in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles an honest record of the lives of those who were attracted to His service, of the reasons which led them to make the sacrifices which were demanded, and of the methods by which His immediate followers won the allegiance of the early converts.

It may be laid down, surely, as a truth beyond dispute, that the first disciples were inspired by a personal attraction to our Lord Himself, combined with a certain belief as to the Nature of His Personality. Let us have the words before our eyes, for it is hardly possible to read them too often: "And as Jesus passed from thence, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him." "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, Whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jonas: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven."

Even if it be held that St. Peter's confession does not represent a faith as complete as that implied in the cry of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God," after the Resurrection, it still remains true to say that in these two texts we find an explanation of the Apostles'

attachment to, and of their faith in, our Lord. Only on this assumption can we understand the methods which they themselves adopted, in their first receiving of converts into the early Church. Their preaching was of Him, "they preached Jesus and the Resurrection": and those who were received into the Church were asked to express their personal faith in Him. When the trembling gaoler at Philippi asked the eternal question, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer was clear: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." So, throughout the Acts of the Apostles, the Church is frequently described as "all them that believed," "the multitude of them that believed." And this matter of faith was considered so fundamental and all-inclusive, that, however difficult it may be to trace with accuracy the details connected with the organization of the early Church, it is admitted that "for at least a century after her foundation, the Church required from candidates for her membership—and even from candidates for her ministry—no other formal profession of faith than this: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."¹

We remember that more than eighteen hundred years have passed, as we look back across the centuries: yet, when we think of those whom we would number among the most faithful disciples of Christ to-day, and ask ourselves what it is that has made them so, we would not hesitate to answer: It is the absolute certainty, which they possess, of the power and the companionship of the living Christ. It is this which has transformed their natures, and given a new direction to their wills: which has filled their lives so completely with another Person, that they can truly say with St.

¹ H. Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, p. 89.

Paul: "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." And it is the loss of Him which takes the light from our heart and tears out the very centre of our life, as a great agnostic sadly confessed: "I have seen the sun shining out of an empty heaven, and have known that *the Great Companion is dead.*" And if it be asked how this consciousness of our Lord's companionship has been gained, we return to the statement that it is due to an act of Faith, once made and often repeated, in our Lord's Personality and in His living Presence in the world to-day. Do we not need to be more honest and fearless on this point? That which is born of the flesh is flesh. The way to the Kingdom is the way of the Spirit, and the way of the Spirit is the way of humility and faith. Before ever it is possible to enter the Kingdom, there must be some definite act of acknowledgment and profession, by which the soul places itself in the right relation to our Lord. This does not imply that any intellectual surrender or any particular intellectual effort has to be made, or that we must be able fully to understand the Divinity of Christ. We have but to believe that He, the living God, is working in the world to-day—for which many thousands of lives completely transformed are no mean evidence—in order to set our feet on the way of Prayer and Communion, by which the contact with Him is preserved, and the union strengthened. When this act of faith has been made we pass, soon or late, to the certainty for which we seek, and "the love of Christ constraineth us" becomes the motto of life. We cannot explain it: for—

"The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know."

We cannot say how it came to us, except to repeat

that it was God's loving answer to our faith. Nor can we even describe it, except by saying that it is a union which nothing but our own will can break. Yet such attempts have been made. Here is one description—mystical and arresting—which those who have read cannot have forgotten.

"It spread through Rome, as in a moment, that a miracle had happened at the Ara Coeli, and that the living Christ was come. . . . He came down the steps of the Campidoglio, and He came to me. He was not at all like the pictures of the Saints; for He was pale and worn and thin, as though the fight were not yet half over—ah, no!—but through the pale and worn look there shone infinite power and undying love and unquenchable resolve. The crowd fell back on every side; but when He came to me He stopped. 'Ah!' He cried, 'is it thou? What doest thou here? Knowest thou not that thou art Mine?' . . . He passed on: *but among ten thousand times ten thousand I should know Him, and in the tumult of a universe I should hear the faintest whisper of His Voice.*"¹

May we pause to read again these last words, and perhaps to remember them? They are taken from a book; they describe a vision, and Rome of the seventeenth century is not modern London. Yet there are thousands walking through the streets and lanes of England to-day who have seen no vision but the world's need and God's answer to it, who can say the words as truly from their hearts as did Malvolti, when he told the story of his conversion in the hospital at Naples.

Such is the Desire for God and its satisfaction: and we pass on to submit that it is the *fullest* desire which

¹ J. H. Shorthouse, *John Inglesant*.

can possess us. No personality is developed to the utmost of its capacity until religion has become a real and true part of it, for not until then is man using all the faculties which God has given to him. The lack of religious faith results in the utter neglect of the higher part of our personality. If an illustration be permitted, let the following be given. Let us imagine a life which has never come under the influence of any spiritual training, from which all religious teaching has been excluded except that of a most perfunctory kind. In the case of those who have passed the early years of their life at an English public school, there remain at least the associations of religion, which (even if in some cases they have effected little more for an Englishman's life) will still bring back memories: sentimental and sleepy memories, perhaps, of the school chapel, but still memories—of something which at one time formed a part of the weekly round, something which counted, for however little, in the school life. But in the public elementary schools it is possible for religious teaching to be confined to the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer, and the hearing of a short exposition of a passage from the Scriptures, which may be of the least edifying nature. (A teacher, for instance, in a London elementary school once confessed that he could extract no material for a lesson from the Parable of the Lost Sheep, except that of kindness to animals. It is not suggested that this attitude is typical, but for the moment we are treating of the least favourable circumstances which we can imagine.) At the age of fourteen education—for ninety per cent. of the scholars—ceases. If we can remember the stage of development which we ourselves had reached at the age of fourteen, and the particular distaste with which, up to and beyond that

age, we regarded any form of learning, we can picture the extent of the equipment with which the ninety per cent. have to face the world. From that day, work absorbs the whole being: the mind and the soul, both almost entirely undeveloped, being left to the mercy of casual reading and chance influences. As life goes on, no need is felt to give fuller play to either of them, except for the purpose of earning daily bread, for which the activity of the soul is not required.

Now let it further be imagined that, at the age of eighteen or later, a boy whose education has been of this kind comes under the influence of a parish priest, and is persuaded to attend a Church Service. He will find himself in a building unlike any that he has entered before: what, for instance, are these—the Font, the Altar, the Pulpit? What are these words, too, which he hears the preacher speak, of repentance, forgiveness, sin; and the lines which he will try to read from the hymn book, which tell of mercy and grace? Those who have ever listened to the description of a complete stranger's first attendance in a church will know that these questions are by no means exaggerated: and they will also remember the conviction with which they were told that the new-comer felt himself to have been learning a new vocabulary, and to have passed an hour "in another world."

It must not be supposed that this picture has been drawn for the purpose of advocating a greater simplicity in our Church Services. However desirable some changes in this direction may be, it should be remembered that mystery and simplicity are much nearer akin than we are inclined to believe, and that it is possible to teach, in the simplest language, the holy mysteries of our Faith. Rather it is intended to serve

as an illustration of the truth that, as soon as we have come to think about Religion, we find that there are many faculties which have hitherto lain dormant—or at least very imperfectly developed—within us: and that not until those faculties are used, can we be said to have developed our whole personality. The stranger was right. We find ourselves “in another world.” A door has been opened in Heaven; through it we are able to “go in and out and find pasture”; to move to and fro with freedom, as we say our prayers and make our Communions—in another world. Nor is this world the creature of our imagination. It is a world of realities—would it not be true to say *the* realities, for they are eternal? We know how difficult it is even to be patient, with those who tell us that this world is a world of shadows peopled with spirits of our own fancy: or to refrain from replying, with Dr. Johnson, “If a man should give me arguments that I cannot answer, to prove that I cannot see; because I cannot answer his arguments, do I believe that I have no eyes?”

In connexion with the use of the expression—“another world,” two points are worthy of mention, in parenthesis. First, this other-worldliness is concerned, as we are here thinking of it, with the immediate present. The world is “other” from the point of view not of time but of content. The spiritual realities do not lie in a far-off future existence: they are to be felt and grasped and enjoyed now in this present time. It is certainly not true to say that this other-worldliness unfits us for the battle of life here and now. The other world is not an idle pleasure-ground, in which we dream our dreams, and pass our time in self-indulgent ease. Rather is it the great treasure-house, where we find the gifts which

we are to distribute to a needy world, the great store-house wherein are laid by memories which strengthen and refresh us in the heat of the day, and the great power-house from which we draw all the best influences which we can hope to exert over our fellow-men. And if ever the charge be brought against our religion that it appears to have but little connexion with this present life, we are driven to conclude either that we are hoarding our own spiritual experiences for selfish ends, or that we have forgotten that the real battle-field is the world of sense. "Thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The power is of God: but it is to be shared with our fellow-men.

Secondly, the question has often been asked as to the particular manifestations of religion which we are to expect in our daily life and work. The number is not inconsiderable of those who desire to carry out their task in the world as efficiently as possible. This, in many cases, is their sole ambition, and from a purely social point of view there could be no worthier object. When they hear of the power of religion, they come to us with this question: Will religion help me in my daily work? Will it make me—for instance—a better bank clerk or a better hospital nurse? The question, we would surely reply, needs expanding before it can be answered. If you mean: Will it help me to add up figures in a ledger with greater accuracy? or, Will it help me to tie a particular bandage with greater speed and skill? the answer certainly is, No. This is not the purpose of religion: it is the work of technical instructors. Christianity has much to say on the subject of industrial relations, but it was never intended to produce industrial efficiency in the individual. It is meant to help you to become, not a better bank clerk, but a better man; not

a better hospital nurse, but a better woman. So that if you mean: Will it help to lighten my task, to raise the tone of my daily life, and to uplift my conception of my work? Will it help me to be gentle and loving even with the most tiresome patients in my ward?—then the answer undoubtedly is, Yes. Because you have become a better man, you will be a better clerk: because you have become a better woman, you will be a better hospital nurse. The results of our religion appear in a generally higher outlook on our life and work, rather than in any increased particular efficiency in the carrying out of the details of which that life's work is made up.

But—to return—from this “other-worldliness” a consideration of supreme importance follows. Of the future which lies before the Christian Faith in our country—whether we can hope for a religious revival which will have permanent results, whether we shall ever see the union of all Christians for which we long—it is useless to prophesy. But of one thing we may be sure: that from the day when Christianity is presented merely as an ethical system, as a collection of moral commands and social duties based upon the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, from that day Christianity is doomed. As a code of moral laws it may survive for a time: but, considered as a religion, its day will be passed. An allusion was made in the last chapter to the danger of Christians being split up into the two sets of professing adherents of Christ, which we called, by way of a rough classification, Worshipers and Followers. Is not this distinction a very important one? There are some who realize that the Christian religion is supernatural—that it came from

another world, that it tells even now of another world, that its end is in another world—who have been “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”; and there are others who would banish every atom of mystery from religion, and leave us with the dry bones of a moral system, which would make no claim upon the higher faculties, and bring nothing new into our lives.

If this latter view prevail, and religion be robbed of all mystery, its content and its object will soon be exhausted: but if we believe that the other-worldliness of which we have spoken is inseparable from the true view of the Christian religion, we shall learn that the riches of our Faith are inexhaustible. In the Person of our Blessed Lord we shall find new solace and strength day by day. The gaps in our lives do not grow fewer; how many, alas! have we to add to their number, even since last Lent? Yet He can fill them all.

“Father to me thou art, and Mother dear,
And Brother too, kind Husband of my heart’—
So speaks Andromache in boding fear,
Ere from her last embrace her hero part—
So evermore, by Faith’s undying glow,
We own the Crucified in weal or woe.”¹

No less, in our Bible reading and in the mysteries of the Holy Eucharist, we shall find new fields of joy and worship. Can we suppose that it is possible to exhaust these riches in the longest life? Surely not, if we believe that they have their source in that which is eternal. If the Wise Men, in their desire for God, made their way across the desert, in order to worship Christ as they saw Him then, a Babe lying in a

¹ J. Keble, *The Christian Year*.

manger ; how much more is there for us to desire and to worship in Him of Whose life we have learned, Whom we know as now Risen, Ascended, and Glorified at the right hand of God !

Let us attempt to sum up the thoughts which have been rather loosely connected in this chapter.

The desire for God is a desire for Union with a Living Person, Who is the Author and Sustainer of our being, without Whom our highest faculties cannot be developed and the noblest part of our human nature is starved. However strongly that desire is felt, it can never be fulfilled until we make an act of Faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, through Whom God has spoken unto us, and in Whom "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." The answer to such an Act of Faith is given in a consciousness of that Union between God and the soul which desires Him: a Union which is maintained by Prayer and Communion, broken—as it so often has been—by our sin, yet restored by God's loving forgiveness: and which, though it can never be made perfect here, will find its deepest fulfilment and its crowning joy in the life to come.

Religion, in its original meaning, signifies "that which binds"—man to his Maker, the soul to God. Full well does He know that in each life there are weak links in the chain: and that in many the weakest link is Faith. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." How simple to say ! Yet how commonplace—God forgive us—the words sometimes sound. "If we really believe what we say we do," cried a young man for whom the dawning of faith, after much trial,

had meant a complete reversal of his outlook on life, "we ought to stand and shout it aloud at every street corner in London." We cannot all do that. But we can whisper it, from the depths of our soul, over and over again as we pray. "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief."

May the appeal be something of this kind? Make this Act of Faith every day in your prayers, and believe the promise; as your Faith grows, so will your Vision. You will see Him to Whom once you came trembling and afraid, Who raised you up and set your feet on the right way, as the World's Desire, and the answer to the world's deepest needs: as the King of Kings, and the Mighty Redeemer, and the Leader who has never failed. In proportion as your Vision grows, *as He grows in your soul, so will your soul grow*, wider and ever wider; till there is room in it not only for Him, but for the whole world which He died to save.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE DISCIPLINE BY WHICH THE SOUL IS
TRAINED ; AND OF THE TIMES OF DARKNESS

“My soul doth wait for Him.”

THUS, with our desires purified and our wills set towards God, we are prepared for the struggle. God shall be the Object of our life, and others, if it be His Will, shall catch the glow which He has kindled in our hearts. We have found the Great Treasure: who will be able to resist sharing it with us? Longing to enter the conflict, we ask God what is His Will; and we are bidden—to wait. For what? we ask. And the answer is, For God: upon Whom we are to depend for the continual help by which alone we can bring our desires to good effect: Who will order our life, both in the world and in the secret chambers of our soul, according to His own purpose: Who has many a hard road for us to travel—hills of difficulty to be climbed, valleys of depression to be crossed—many a discipline to be learned: and certainly not the least of these is the discipline of waiting.

There are many parallels to be found between the methods which God has used in teaching the world, and those by which He tends and trains the human soul. One of the most conspicuous of these lies before us: and if it be true that only through age-long discipline and patience the world came to the full knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, we may learn

through its history something of the way in which God works out His purpose, and of the discipline which we may reasonably expect to be imposed upon our own lives.

It would not be untrue to describe the religious history of the world, before the Incarnation, as the history of a waiting world and a teaching God. We read of mankind always learning, yet never satisfied: always grasping some new truth, yet as surely looking forward to receiving others: sometimes falling back, yet again pressing on. And all the time God is watching, working, teaching. Catastrophes are countered by promises of recovery: despair is met with a message of hope: longings are assured of their ultimate fulfilment. The Old Testament abounds in uncertainties. Great truths shine out of its pages, compelling in their grandeur and simplicity: yet the atmosphere is one of continual expectation; for the fuller truths of Salvation man is bidden to hope and to wait. The New Testament is the book of certainties and fulfilments. "Many prophets and kings," our Lord said to His disciples, "have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them." (We still know only in part, it is true: but though our knowledge be partial, the ignorance is not one of uncertainty, but of a necessary limitation.) The possibilities of the old Covenant become the certainties of the Gospel. The hopes of Israel are fulfilled in the Church of God.

Let us, then, learn this lesson of history, before we consider the words in their meaning for our lives, by examining an instance of this discipline of waiting in which God has seen fit to train the world. And let the instance be found in the gradual revelation which

He gave to mankind of a truth which cannot but occupy a prominent place in the minds of all at this time, the truth of Immortality. While death seems nearer to life than ever before, and life is surrendering every hour to that which we know as death, which of us has not exclaimed—

“Ah, Christ ! that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be”?

Whether we shall ever know more than has been revealed, we cannot tell: here the object is rather to emphasize the truth that we know much, and that our present knowledge is the result of a gradual revelation: of a waiting world on the one hand, that has been in varying degrees faithful to the light which from time to time has been given to it: of a teaching God, on the other hand, Who has granted to men, by degrees, a share in His counsels and a knowledge of His working.

We should look in vain, in the earliest chapters of the Bible, for any mention of a doctrine of Immortality. Other truths concerning God and man, elementary truths without which Immortality would be meaningless and a belief in it impossible, are first taught and insisted upon, to form the foundation on which the whole structure of Revelation is to be raised. But as soon as these first truths have been stated, when the natures of God and man have been explained, the question of man's ultimate destiny cannot for long be left out of consideration. As a member of the chosen race, man is bidden to love and serve God all the days of his life; but, when these days are over, what then? Does he pass into another form of existence, or does he cease to be? Gradually, in answer to this question,

there grew up a belief in another world, a world of shades, devoid of light and beauty, of love and hate; an under-world of gloom, "a place of darkness and in the deep"; where kings and beggars, the good and the evil, alike passed into a shadowy and purposeless existence, without extinction yet without hope. Only for a time, however, did God leave His people without a larger vision than this. In some of the Psalms we find a conception of the under-world which includes the belief in a continued fellowship with God, a hope that the joy which the soul found in communion with God in life may not be broken at death: from this the godless and wicked who have had their portion in this life will be cut off, but the saint may be privileged to see God face to face. This is the foundation of the faith of Job, who is led, through the hope that the dead may be delivered from the vague existence of the under-world, to the knowledge that he will see his Vindicator, whom his eyes shall behold, and not another. In the prophetic books, as we should expect, the individual is almost lost sight of: it is national survival and national restoration which is the main theme of the prophets' appeal: and even in the great vision of the prophet Daniel—in which "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"—the hope does not extend beyond the limits of the chosen people.

This is the atmosphere in which the world is left, when suddenly the full light breaks upon mankind, and our Lord brings to the waiting world the "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." Sometimes His teaching is bound up with the warnings of the judgment, sometimes the truth is merely stated;

but, under whatever form the assurance of the life to come is given, the central Figure in the picture is our Lord Himself. It is faith in Him which assures us of the truth: "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." It is He Who will summon the dead from their resting-place: "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." To Him the Father has "committed all judgment": and it is He Who, as the Son of Man, reigning and in His glory, will say at the last: "Come, ye blessed of My Father." Most strongly is this connexion insisted on by St. Paul. If Christ Himself be not risen, then our faith is vain: but "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept": so that, for those who hold this faith, to die is merely to "depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

Here then is the certainty. The time of darkness is past: the full light is given: and He Who gives it is the True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

For us therefore, to whom this great truth has been revealed, it is of very real import to notice how these two parts of our Lord's teaching are connected. The truth is not only that He has conquered death, but also that we cannot dissociate our own conception of the future life from that of His Personality: in other words, through Him alone can this certain hope be sustained. "He that believeth on Me . . ."—here is our passport to eternal happiness. To-day, when many have parted with those who were as dear to them as life itself, when thousands are bearing about them the agony of the insistent question, Shall we meet again? and (God have pity on them!) are finding in some cases no answer,

have we not one clear duty : to assure them, gently and lovingly as we can, but with an emphasis of which there can be no doubt, that there is but one way to find the answer? If they would have the door opened, they must come to Him Who holds the key. For when we have discussed and dissected, and fled in despair to every system, new or old, which is offered as balm for our grief, we are driven back to consider the teaching of Him Who said, " I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life " : the Way, because He Himself triumphed over death ; the Truth, because He Himself first told of the sure and certain hope for all mankind ; and the Life, because the life eternal and more abundant, which the Father has given to us, is in Him. So His appeal is still the same. To the widow and the fatherless, to those who have lost brother or friend, and who long to know, it is still : Come unto Me. If we have lived far from Him or without Him, we must not be surprised to find our faith in immortality feeble and uncertain. If we remain apart from Him in our sorrow, we shall never believe it fully : but if we draw near to Him, and trust His promise, we shall find the glorious certainty for which we long.

Furthermore, if this be true : if the future life is bound up so intimately with our Lord Himself, can we not find here something certain on which to build and in which to trust? It is indeed, as St. Paul warns us, just here that we know in part. Proofs are not wanting that this has failed to satisfy many of those who are mourning to-day, who are attempting to hold more definite communication with the departed than it seems God's Will that we should yet enjoy. Can we not rest content with the certainty that they are in His keeping?

"Our knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim.
It is enough that Christ knows all,
And we shall be with Him."

And if this should bring little comfort, are we not for that very reason called upon to strengthen our union with Him? The more we know and love Him personally, the wider will be our vision of the life to come, and the more happy we shall be to leave our future and that of our loved ones in His hands.

Another instance, concerning which little need be said, of the gradual methods by which God has taught a waiting world, can be found in the truth of the Fatherhood of God. We are so familiar with the Lord's Prayer, and with the conception of God as our Father and the Father of all the world, that we hardly realize the sudden and tremendous revolution in the conception of man's nature and destiny which was brought about by our Lord's teaching. It seems, for instance, matter for astonishment to us, that St. Peter should have met with serious opposition, when he declared that the Holy Ghost had been given to the Gentiles: or that St. Paul's declaration in Jerusalem that he had been sent to preach the Gospel to those outside the Covenant should have been greeted with the angry cry that he was not fit to live. But we must remember that the idea of a God Who had made of one blood all the nations of the earth was utterly foreign to Jewish thought. The appeal to the universal Fatherhood of God is almost unknown. To a Jew God was the God of Israel: so little was He the Father of other peoples that the Israelites were bidden to separate themselves from, and to avoid all contact with, the nations among whom they dwelt. In the historical books, efforts to proselytize are unknown: and even in

those passages which give us glimpses of the longing for this relationship to be established, God is still conceived of as the Father of Israel only. The world is still waiting when our Lord appears among men with His message. From the first He explains that the Jews could no longer claim a monopoly of the Divine favour: that God could raise up, from the pebbles of the river-bed, children unto Abraham. The Fatherhood of God is proclaimed in all its fullness. Without His knowledge not one sparrow falls to the ground, He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends His rain on the just and the unjust. "When ye pray, say, Our Father"—and learn that His love is as wide as the world.

Such was the discipline of waiting which God imposed upon the world which He taught. And it is suggested that after the same manner God trains and disciplines the human soul.

There are two sets of experiences in our lives which may bring home to us the very real meaning of the words, "My soul doth wait for Him." The first occurs during those times of transition, in which we may be called upon to pass from one phase of faith to another, or—perhaps we should rather say—from one conception of any particular aspect of the Christian faith to another. The second includes all those times of darkness and desolation, through which God allows the human soul to grope its way.

Very few lives can claim to have been free from the periods of transition, nor is it surprising that it should be so. If we remember the stages through which our education passed, in those subjects outside the immediate sphere of religion which form a normal part of all mental training, it should not astonish us if similar

developments have their place in matters of faith. If our teachers gradually led us into higher regions of study and thought, beginning with the simplest truths and guiding us step by step to those more suited to a maturing intellect, is it not natural to assume that our soul will be led along the same path? It is indeed this arrested development in the sphere of religion, while we are advancing in every other realm of thought and activity, which has been responsible more than once for the shipwreck of faith. In our conception, for instance, of the exact manner in which we are united to God through the atoning death of Christ, in the mental pictures which we form of the state of eternal bliss, in our definition of the word Inspiration as applied to the Holy Scriptures, we may find the old ground slipping away from under us, and nothing at first taking its place. We are then tempted to fear that there is no ground but the old ground on which to stand; and, in our first confusion, we wonder whether anything is worth saving from the wreck, or whether all is not darkness and uncertainty. Here is our discipline: we are bidden to wait, in absolute assurance that God will lead us to the light for which we ask; and, while we wait, we remember, to our comfort, two great certainties.

First, God is Truth. There is nothing to be lost by honestly facing the difficulties as they come to us. It is impossible to think of God either as deceiving the world or as rejoicing in a world deceived. When we look for Truth, we look for God: and it is in His Light that we shall see light. Secondly, "If any man willeth to do His Will, he shall know of the doctrine." The danger begins for us, not at the moment when we recognize the difficulties which may beset an immature faith, but when we leave the way of life which we once trod in the spirit and

support of that faith. "One lesson," it was said of a famous thinker, "there does seem to lie in such a life of such a man: a lesson which he taught equally by example and in word: that, wherever there is genuine and thorough love for good and goodness, no speculative superstructure of opinion can be so extravagant as to forfeit those graces which are promised, not to clearness of intellect, but to purity of heart."¹

Genuine and thorough love for good and goodness! Here at least is something that can be saved, something with which we must never part. We remember the life which was built up on the old foundation: charity towards all men: a real desire to know God in Prayer and Communion: unselfishness and love in our home: self-sacrifice and self-control: purity of heart and motive—if we cling to these, then indeed God will not and cannot fail us, and we shall be given a new foundation, which will not only bear the old structure, but will enable us to build higher and higher towards the God upon Whom we have learned to wait.

We should also remember that, if God demands this patience from us, as we wait for Him, no less does He ask us to show it towards those of our fellow-men who do not see Him as we do. Surely the greatest tax on our patience is to listen to some of the assaults which are made upon our religion. We would certainly not include in these the difficulties which are felt by thoughtful people, with whom it should always be a joy and a privilege to discuss the mysteries of our Faith. But when we have to bear the monstrous mis-statements of opponents, the easy sneer with which the superficial will dismiss the whole question of the supernatural, the irrelevant issues raised by those who would find any

¹ J. A. Froude, *Short Studies*: "Spinoza."

system of religious faith a very inconvenient factor in their lives, or the shallow dogmatism of the young and the half-educated, it is then indeed that we need all the patience which we can command. But we may reverently try to imagine what the feelings of our Lord must have been, when—burning as He was with the desire to proclaim to all men the message of His Father's love, and to tell of the new hope which He had brought to mankind—He was asked to settle some trivial question concerning the division of an inheritance, or to take part in a quibble about the tribute-money. Yet He remains always dignified and unmoved; in this, as in all else, an example to ourselves, when like Him we have to bear the ignorance or malice of the world.

Common to a larger number perhaps are those times of darkness and desolation which come upon the soul; when God seems infinitely remote, when acts of Communion seem to bring Him no nearer, and Prayer is utterly ineffectual in making His Presence felt in our lives. What can we do when these times of desolation come upon us? Are we still merely to wait, till God shall see fit to give us refreshment? The suffering which the soul passes through is very real, and it is worth while to attempt an answer to the question.

Above all, let us be sure that it is through no fault of our own that we are passing through the darkness: that our desires and our will are truly set in the direction of God: that we have not lowered the tone of our life: that we have not allowed a spirit of carelessness to enter into our religious exercises: and, not least, that we are ready to make any effort that may be required of us, in order that we may come through to the light. This last is a subtle danger, but by no means an unreal one. There

was a certain melancholy satisfaction, we remember, which Mrs. Gummidge found in the constant reference to her isolated condition : and there are not a few who almost prefer to acquiesce in a state which may make them objects of pity and sympathy to their spiritual directors and their fellow-Christians, rather than to make the full effort, which frequently lies within the power of their own will, to extricate themselves from their unhappy condition.

Let us also be careful to state the problem correctly. It is not that God has deserted us ; this we dare not say, or rather, we know that in reality it cannot be : it is that He seems to have done so : in other words, that we do not feel Him to be as near to us as we would wish. This is the true statement of the difficulty, and it is very different from the other. For does not the warning need to be constantly repeated, that we are not wise to make our feelings the standard by which we chiefly measure our spiritual progress ? Surely we have had good cause, and not once only, to mistrust our feelings ? Have we not yet learned to assign to them their right place, that strange border-land between good and evil, of which it is so easy, and yet so dangerous, to lose control ? Only a few years back (though it seems a generation), we could have truly said that this blind trust in feeling was driving our nation headlong in the worst direction. It was an age of sensation, hurrying, unthinking, and passionate : of sensation divorced from the control alike of reason and religion, which are its only safeguards. The plots of our novels and the problems of our plays were tainted with, if not built upon, it. We did not realize whither we were being hurried. We only saw that age in its youth ; to see it in its dotage were piteous indeed : of all the horrors one, at least, has been spared to us.

This is not to suggest that there is no place in religion for feeling: to do so would be to pass to the other extreme and to represent religion as a problem for the intellectuals, which is an altogether maimed conception of its nature and function. Religion is concerned with the whole man: and the true attitude towards that which we know as our feelings would seem to be that we should rejoice and give thanks, whenever the sense of God's nearness is specially vouchsafed to us, but that for the test of our sincerity and of the hold which God has upon our lives, we should look elsewhere. We are to ask, not—how near do I feel God to me? but rather—what am I prepared to do or to suffer for His sake? If the will to persevere and to follow on be not lacking, there is no desolation which we need fear, no darkness through which we shall not pass to the light.

Again, it is ours, we will not forget, to strive: and God's to grant attainment, in the way which seems best to Him. The reward is not always the vision: far from it. Can we avoid noticing how varied are the responses which God gives to those who are seeking after Him? All come to Him with the same request upon their lips, that their will may be made one with His will. Yet how different are the manifestations of this fellowship with God, as we see it in the Christian life. To one He gives the power to lead a life of sacrifice in the service of mankind. You will look in vain for any trace of mysticism in that life. You will find steady prayer, much hard work, amazing persistence, dauntless courage, unshakable devotion to duty, and that is all. Yet would we not say that in these God is found? In another life you will find grievous sin: terrible stains upon the soul: falls from grace which seem to make recovery impossible. Yet from the same soul there

come the outpourings of a penitence as utterly real as the sin, a love deep down in the soul which is capable of offering itself again and again, and a heart as broken as was the sinner's who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears. And it is in that penitence, in that love, and in that broken heart, that God gives the assurance of His abiding Presence. To others God grants a wonderful fullness of vision, here in this present life. The world knows nothing of them ; they have little influence over their fellow-men ; they walk as strangers in this hurrying world, where their lives seem almost out of place. Yet, day by day, "bitter with weariness and sick with sin," which they can neither check nor understand, they can return to kneel in that Presence which is their home, and be lost to the world which will not heed them. And in that Presence they find their peace. Who would not believe that to each of these God has given a sure answer, and that all, in a measure, have attained ? Would any one of them be jealous of another, or complain because God's response was not the same to all ? So in the darkness we may learn, even while we pray for much, to be content with a little, if it be this that God offers ; and thus to resign ourselves to His Will.

Once more, is it not possible that we may cry for more of the vision than can be granted in this life ? Does it not sometimes amount to this, that we are asking to be freed even here from the burden of the flesh, that we would already share the joy of the Saints ? It is a help, in the dark hours, to remind ourselves of the weight which lies upon us. If only we were freed from the flesh ! Alas ! we are not. We have to accept its presence, even if we refuse to acknowledge its dictates : we have to submit, that is, to something which can clog and hamper and bind us down : which has many times

proved its power to do so in our lives. The soul is, as it were, in a continual state of recovery. The progress will be slow, and relapses may be frequent: but in patience and perseverance lies the secret of restoration. He that will endure to the end—he that will not lose courage in the gloom, but will wrestle till the light be given; whose heart is torn, but whose head is still uplifted; who fears no darkness save that of sin, and would rather give up life than hope—the same shall be saved.

“Truth sits upon the lips of dying men”: and last words are worthy of remembrance. The shadows are already falling; and, as the end draws near, the dying man puts out his hand to feel a human touch: but his thoughts have passed into another world; in which—is it a memory as well as a hope?—

“If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; *I press God's Lamp*
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.
You understand me? I have said enough?”¹

* * * * *

Blessed Jesus, Light of all the world, in Whose Light alone we shall see light: Help us to believe that Thou art with us in the darkness, even when we cannot feel Thee near. Guide our stumbling footsteps, and shed Thy bright beams upon our path. And lead us at the last, through the valley of the shadow, into the Light of Eternal Day, that with Thy Saints we may see Thy Face, and praise Thee for ever. Amen.

¹ R. Browning, *Paracelsus*.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE FLIGHT TOWARDS THE HOLY CITY; OF THE DANGER OF TARRYING, AND OF SAFETY IN GOD

“ My soul fleeth unto the Lord, before the morning watch.”

THE words suggest a picture : let it be something of this kind. In the far distance, at the top of the canvas, the Heavenly City : a blaze of red and gold, and bright with a thousand lights. Through the opened latticed windows would come a sense of thrill, of movement and life : the gates of the city standing wide, its streets thronged with dazzling figures. Below the City, darkness and shadow, as of a great forest ; a single path, steep and rugged, winding up through the gloom, with here and there a Calvary where the way was hardest. One or two figures kneeling at the Calvaries, another breasting the hill with back bowed, another struggling to gain foothold on the path. Across the centre would stretch a wide table-land ; and sloping downward, falling away out of the picture, broad roads and meadow paths, on which the sun casts shadows through overhanging trees. On the table-land the central figures : one gazing in rapture at the distant City, another resting, a third looking wistfully towards the valley : a group or two of men and women in lively argument : and on their faces hope, determination, weariness, or regret. We could call the picture by its old name of

"The Pilgrim's Progress," or "Not far from the Kingdom of God": this perhaps the better, with the verse of our Psalm in mind. Not far—some with their faces turned in one direction, some in another: but all within sight of the Heavenly City.

"My soul fleeth unto the Lord." What do the words imply? *Decision*, first of all: with which we associate the power of choice. There have never been wanting those who would revolt against any view of life which represents man as a machine driven headlong by some power outside himself, or by some mechanical contrivance in his own system, which he can neither influence nor control. The habit of deliberation which precedes decision, the sensation of satisfaction or regret which follows closely in the train of action, would seem to bear sufficient witness in themselves to the possibility of alternative action. There is, of course, no freedom which is absolute, except that of God: human freedom is conditioned and restricted by many factors, not the least important of which is the use which the agent himself has made of that freedom in the past. But, when all has been said, do not the simple experiences of everyday life, of resistance or concession, of struggle or surrender, justify the conviction that the power of choice is a reality? It is, perhaps, the heaviest of all the responsibilities which combine to make up the dignity of our human nature.

When alternatives are limited, choice is not too difficult: but as the field widens, decision becomes less easy. Here we shall note one of the most striking, if obvious, contrasts between the life, let us say, of half a century ago, and that of the present time. Life was then a much more simple affair than we find it to-day.

Alternatives were less numerous, effort more concentrated, interests less diverse. Because its sphere was narrower, decision was more simple. We may take such a clear instance as that of the way in which Sunday was spent by our forefathers. The alternatives to Church attendance were neither numerous nor attractive enough to draw away the half-hearted from at least the outward observance of religious conventions. But, while men slept, the enemy came. While the outward manifestations of religion were still customary, while Church attendance, largely by force of habit, retained its hold on a large section of our countrymen, the question seems seldom to have been asked, whether this was due to a reality of conviction and devotion, or to the absence of counter-attractions in the national life. Whenever the question was asked, as in the days of the Evangelical revival, the universal surprise with which the demand for a greater reality in religion was greeted, showed quite clearly where the truth lay. And now that the enemy has come, we find that the religion which is to hold its own, to attract and to inspire, to claim and to keep, will have to be something much more virile, more personal, and more dynamic than that which we have been accustomed to associate with too many periods of our Church's history. The advance of science and the pursuit of pleasure have worked the change. The means of transit have become as carefully and as widely organized on Sunday as on other days of the week, and the growth of the "restaurant habit" has afforded possibilities of entertainment and amusement which were unheard of by our fathers. The Church is now only one of many competitors, in company with the picture-palace, the river, the golf-links, and the concert hall, for the support and loyalty of the people.

Decision has become more difficult, because the field of choice has widened.

Have we leave, at this point, to digress for a moment, on this subject of the observance of Sunday, which is of no small importance to our Church and Nation at the present time? The old conditions of life have passed away, never to return. Work is more strenuous than formerly, city life is more congested, the strain of the industrial system on the individual worker is very severe: and it may be doubted whether it is wise to apply in all respects the old standards to the new conditions. The problem is indeed a serious one: but perhaps there are one or two lines of thought which are worthy of consideration, in making any attempt to solve it.

Let it be suggested, in the first place, that the world should be left in no doubt as to the nature of the position taken up by the Church, on the general question: which is that the Church is contending in this case—not necessarily for the good as against the obviously evil, but for the best as against the second or third best. It is worth while to insist on this, especially in view of the oft-repeated question as to “what harm it does” for the tired town-worker to spend Sunday in the country, and there to refresh his body and mind, as he undoubtedly can, and to return invigorated and refreshed, as in many cases he does, to his work on Monday. The answer suggested is that, presuming the particular recreation in which he indulges is free from definite evil, it is hardly possible to say that there is positive harm in it. It has, in a sense, done good: but the benefit which has been gained is such as to affect only one part, and that not the most important part, of his nature. The good which has been gained is limited: it is not the best.

If this would be granted, the efforts of the Church should be concentrated on the positive presentation of a higher ideal, rather than on a wholesale condemnation of existing standards and customs. For if it be true that "every bullet has its billet," expressions such as "the desecration of the Sabbath" must constitute the exception which proves the rule. They do not hit the mark. They are often misinterpreted for thoughtless abuse and may do much harm to our cause: whereas the former position, though it may not be accepted, is at least intelligible even to those who do not agree with us.

Secondly, it is worth while to ask whether the Church should not attempt to strike more deeply at the source of the difficulty rather than at its actual manifestations. Responsibility in many cases rests with the secular authority—whether it be Parliament or County or District Council—and in their hands lies also the power of control. Is it altogether reasonable, for instance, for a layman to object to the secularization of Sunday in his borough, if he refuses to serve on the same Council as a man of lower social standing than himself? Or for the Church to heap abuses on the heads of Councillors, when her own laymen have received such a narrow training in the sphere of civic duty that they do not recognize their responsibility to secure the representation of the Church on these bodies? The reforms which have been effected in this and other matters of public morality have been brought about almost entirely through deputations or representations to controlling bodies; they have shown us the lines along which right action lies. But if the preventive, as well as the curative, method were adopted, the Church would make efforts to secure, through her laymen, a more adequate representation on

these bodies, and so check the evil at its source. We are searching to-day for opportunities of concerted action amongst all men of good-will; here at least lies one far-reaching opportunity for social betterment, in which Christians of all bodies could unite in a common effort. It is, indeed, much to be hoped that the recently formed Christian Crusade may succeed in its attempt to organize and to focus a great body of Christian opinion, which may deal effectively with these and kindred matters.

Thirdly, have we not to remember that, with the important exception of matters of principle on which the Church has clearly spoken, the attitude even of the most loyal Church-people cannot but be conditioned by the customs of the larger society, the State, of which they are also members? Examples are not wanting, as in the case of the Divorce Laws, of an open cleavage between the enactments of the civil power and the divinely ordained laws of the Church; and, where this collision occurs, there is no doubt which must give way. But cases occur in which the course of duty is by no means so clear. It is not probable that there would be complete agreement among Christians on the position, let us say, of a "small tradesman" who finds it necessary, in order to gain a livelihood, to open his shop on Sunday, and wishes at the same time to remain in communion with the Church. This is a very practical difficulty, which is becoming more acute every day. We can, of course, cut the knot and contend that, if such be the result of commercial enterprise, the Church would do well to wash her hands of commerce altogether and leave it to those who are entirely indifferent to the claims of religion: but it is at least questionable whether this would not be the worse evil of the two. We repeat

that the Church has a clear duty to hold out the highest ideal, and to point to the best: but—always excepting cases such as that mentioned above—whether the Church should exclude from communion those who find their lives conditioned by the laws and customs of the State, and are forced, in the struggle for a livelihood, into a course of action which of their own free-will they would have been unwilling to adopt, is a question not so easy of settlement.

The object of this digression has been to illustrate the truth that, the more complex life becomes, the greater becomes also the difficulty of choice and decision. And, if we leave the wider problems on one side, we shall be forced to admit the truth of this contention, as it has appeared in our own lives. We would agree that it accounts largely for the prevalence of that half-hearted religion, which is such a burden to its victim, and so little help to God and His Church. It would not be untrue to say that the two chief hindrances to the making of the great decision, are the call of the World, and the fear of consequences. For ever beating upon our ears is this sinister call: "Why should you put yourself out for something so problematical as religion? There are many people who lead good lives and never go to Church: and, really, the people who have a great deal to do with the Church are so odd: and you will lose so much of the pleasure of life if you become too enthusiastic about religion. Why trouble yourself about it? Why not come out into the world, the living, human, beating world, which is so much more real than anything else, and enjoy life while you can?"

So, worrying and insistent, the call repeats itself again and again, like the unattended call of a telephone: and,

if we heed it, we find, to our sorrow, that "the half heart in religion is a heavy heart." For it is just this lukewarm adherence which gives us enough religion to make us uncomfortable in the restraints which it imposes, with none of the priceless joy which follows whole-hearted surrender. To-day, if ever, God pleads for reality. It is a question of life or death, advance or extinction, for Churches, nations, races. The strain is felt to the uttermost: and our one hope of relief is to make our religion the most real thing in our lives. Dare we fail our King now, when every prayer is needed, and the whole effort of every Christian soul should be thrown into the balance? Can we forget the terrible doom pronounced on those who gave no help in the day of battle? "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

And what of the fear of consequences, the fear of being marked men and women, of being known as followers of the Crucified? The fear that many previous habits of life may have to be given up: that our standard of values will have to be revised: that personal inconveniences will have to be suffered: that we may even have to be confirmed in the open Church, side by side with boys and girls: that our friends will know of our decision? The fear of consequences: what a mighty force it wields! Yet, can we not here learn one lesson from history? On that fateful night in August 1914, when the representative of our King in Berlin and the German Chancellor conversed together for the last time, before the awful decision was made, was not the question put: "But at what price will that compact have been kept? Has the British Government thought of that?"

The answer followed, which should be written in letters of gold across the page of our English history—we only know it in the restrained language of a diplomatist's report: "I hinted to His Excellency, as plainly as I could, that fear of consequences could hardly be regarded an excuse for breaking solemn engagements." In the might of that sentence, and on the honour of our plighted word, our country has staked her all. Here, surely, is our example. If the day come to us when we can make the Great Decision or the Great Refusal—nay, does not the opportunity come to us, in one sense, every day?—God grant that each one of us may have the answer ready: "I care not what the consequences may be. Let the world scoff, if it will. My religion is my pride, my life, my joy, on which I am ready to stake all that I have, and all that I hope to be. My face is set towards the Heavenly City. My feet will not turn back, neither will my steps go out of the way, till my eyes shall see the King in his Beauty."

The words tell of *Haste*. The start on the journey,—before the morning watch—the setting of our feet on the right way, must not be put off. Youth is the time of choice, of freedom, and of resolve: the longer we live, the more mechanical are our decisions. The manner of life has become fixed, and the old can seldom leave the path which they chose in youth and followed in middle age. *Si jeunesse savait!* If youth would but believe it! for we may catch glimpses in later days of the vision which we once saw and might have followed: but it can never be the same. The picture will be blurred, its outlines will be less sharp. It will have become something to gaze at in regretful appreciation, rather than a vision to which the eye

springs at once, in which the unspoiled nature can rejoice with the whole sure instinct of a stainless youth. We have but to walk again over the meadows, the gardens, and the hills which we trod in our boyhood, to know that this is true. What is the sense of disappointment here, which makes us sometimes glad to turn our backs and to walk sadly away? Is it that the days have come when we say that we have no pleasure in them? Their beauty is unchanged. The meadows are as green, the gardens as fair, and the hills as near the sky as they used to be. Yet we try in vain to feel the thrill we knew, to catch the vision we remember. For the days have come in which we can only look out through smoked glasses. The infinite shades of colour, light, and beauty, have passed into "the grey" from which we can no more "call the glory." The untarnished vision is no longer ours.

So with all possible vigour we condemn, without qualification and without compromise, the counsel which the world is ever ready to offer to the young, that they should "sow their wild oats." Above all, we will remember of what sort they are from whom this counsel comes. We expect such advice from those who have made no effort to reap where they have not sown, who have but sown the wind and are content to reap the whirlwind. But there are others who, while there was yet time, shrank from the prospect of such a harvest: who have seen the folly and the result of their sowing in the ceaseless struggle which is required, if they are ever to reap the better harvest. It is from them that we should seek counsel. And from the passionate regrets and the grim struggles of middle life, they cry with one accord:

"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report think upon these things." Flee unto the Lord before the morning watch. See God, seek Him and find Him, while the Vision is yet clear, while the power of choice and decision is still yours. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

The words tell of *Danger*, for this is implied in every flight. It would not to some appear necessary to discuss the question whether or not danger lurks in the life of the world, whether or not we should be likely to encounter it on our journey to the Heavenly City. But the number is not inconsiderable of those who would maintain that it lies far out of this or indeed of any other path which the traveller might choose. Yet these counsellors lack the guilelessness which would alone afford excuse for a view so roseate; and, of all the serpent's qualities, we feel that wisdom is perhaps the one in which they least excel.

Much attention, to take an instance, has recently been drawn to the moral effect produced by theatrical productions of a certain type. The answer for the defence has commonly been, that "it all depends upon the point of view." This is perfectly true, and it is exactly here that we join issue. We shall recognize some old friends from *The Pilgrim's Progress* who will be ready to challenge us. "Simple said, I see no danger. Sloth said, Yet a little more sleep; and Presumption said, Every vat must stand upon its own bottom." The Pilgrim would not wish us harm, we are sure, if we say that we have heard these voices speaking in the more colloquial phrases of our own

century. "Man of the World said, I don't believe that it is as bad as you make out. Indifferent said, Is it really worth while to make all this fuss about it? And Thoughtless said, The boy will find these things out fast enough for himself."

"It all depends upon the point of view." Certainly; and so long as the answer does not imply that the question is thereby closed, we are prepared to accept it—but only as a challenge. It is a matter of no small astonishment how often the apologists for anything which is undesirable will claim that they find a justification for their villainy in the fact that a certain section of society condones their actions. The difference between the judge and the cut-throat is after all only that of a point of view; yet the cut-throat would be hard put to it to persuade the judge that, inasmuch as he knew of other good men and true who approved of cutting throats, his act of murder was therefore justified. In the case under consideration, the very fact that there is a point of view which refuses to admit either the magnitude of the danger or the need for warning, is almost the chief source of anxiety to the advocates of reform. One of their primary objectives is to spare no effort in order to bring about a radical change in the points of view which we have quoted: to maintain that the danger is a real one, and that proofs are not wanting of its reality: that any question which affects the moral life of a nation is worth "making a fuss about": that, indeed, the boy will "find out about these things fast enough for himself." Alas that he will! especially if he be given a latch-key at the age of seventeen. We said something, in the last paragraph, of the cost at which the discovery will be made.

May this one axiom be laid down with emphasis, that of all the responsibilities with which parents are burdened, there is one which they can neither refuse to accept nor delegate to others—the responsibility of warning their children of the dangers which they will have to face in life? A father who does not shrink from the task becomes immediately not only a father, but a friend. Whatever mistakes or follies a boy may commit, the day will come when he can no longer bear the shame of them alone. A very little experience will have taught us that there is one in whom he will then confide: for he will have no doubt that the father who had the courage to warn will have also the sympathy to understand and the heart to forgive.

Lastly, the words tell of *Safety*. If there be danger in the world, there is sanctuary with God. "Thou art a place to hide me in . . . under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge." And here care is needed, lest we be too indefinite in our meditation on this word. The feeling of confidence in God, which is the outcome of living consciously in His Presence, may tempt us to believe that little effort on our own part is needed to keep within the protecting influence of the safety which He offers: with such a faith as this, while actually in sight of safety, we should be incurring perhaps the greatest risk of all. For wherein does that safety lie? Does it not lie in dependence and union? Are there not two ways by which we shall prove how living is our faith in this safety:—by the extent to which we actually depend upon and trust God's guidance day by day, and by the effort which we are prepared to put forward, in order to make the union with Him as vital as possible?

There is an instinct which tells us that God should be the first to share our troubles, our temptations, and our plans. It will pass into a habit if we will but heed it, and will become one of the guiding principles of life. By obeying it, we are able to raise the meanest details and the most trivial plans, as well as the most far-reaching decisions, of our life, into a higher atmosphere, where they can be considered away from earthly promptings, petty prejudices, and worldly motives. Our safety lies in taking them immediately to God. Human discussion too often obscures the issue, or raises others which are irrelevant. Solitary deliberation, without prayer, gives easy entrance to selfish motives and desires of too low a level. But the immediate placing of our difficulties and our plans in the hands of the Holy Spirit results in much illumination; which will be all the more clear for the reason that we have at once submitted them to His control, before ever our resolve can be misdirected by human deceitfulness or vacillation. Have we not pleaded guilty to a feeling of surprise, on discovering how the solution of every difficulty for the "simple Christian" is to "lay it before the Lord"? We have been willing to learn, and that not once only, from the Nonconformists: here, at least, is a phrase which it were no shame to borrow. Allusion has already been made to the danger of too great a familiarity in the approach to God; but we should do wrong to confuse this with a simple trust in His unfailing guidance. The one is due to ignorance, or forgetfulness, of God's character: the other follows from that complete dependence upon Him which teaches us that nothing is too trivial for His notice and His help.

And what of the deliberate and systematic effort

which is required to maintain the living union between God and the soul? Must the old questions be asked again? They must, for they are vital. Have we made a rule of life, of Communion, of Prayer, and of Bible-reading? Do we keep the rule which we once made? And, above all, when we break it, do we re-make it and start afresh? Have we imposed the strictest limits to our time alike of outward activity and of leisure, so as to leave time for the inward activity of the soul towards God, without which it is impossible to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight? The danger in life to-day is not inactivity, which would be shame indeed, but an excess of the lower activities: not lack of energy, but the misdirection of it—

“Dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old with drawing nothing up”:

the danger of being carried round and round in the circles of the whirlpool, instead of moving steadily along in the current of the stream. We know that this is so, from the excuses which we offer: that we could not get up early to receive the Blessed Sacrament because we were working far into the night before: that we had not time to read our Bibles in the morning, because we had to be punctual at the office, the hospital, the breakfast-table, or the committee meeting: and that at night we were too worn-out, after the day's work, to say any but the feeblest and coldest prayers.

Often as these questions have been asked, so often has the answer been given. It is, and will remain, unalterable: that we must *make* the time in which to “flee unto the Lord”: that, if other matters and engagements are important, they are as nothing compared with the greatest need of all, which is to preserve

touch with Him, Whom truly to know is everlasting life. Those who have read *Father and Son* will not have forgotten the passage in which Mr. Edmund Gosse describes a visit that Charles Kingsley once paid to his father's house. There are probably few who would not have welcomed the opportunity of a talk with Kingsley, and fewer still, we imagine, who would have dared to keep him waiting with the message: "Tell Mr. Kingsley that I am engaged in examining Scripture with certain of the Lord's children." It is a striking picture which is drawn, and one of which the lesson is not obscure—the author of *Westward Ho!* pacing up and down the garden on a winter's morning, till such time as the eminent biologist should have finished his Bible study with the natives of Oddicombe.

Safety in the Lord! It is His to give, and ours to seek and to keep. And if ever we take pride that we have cast out devils in His Name and in His Name have done many wondrous works, even while the light in our souls burned low, there is something to give us pause and to bring our steps back to the right way, in His solemn warning. "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven."

CHAPTER X

OF THE DUTY OF HOPE

"O Israel, hope in the Lord."

THE appeal is now addressed to a wider circle, and the Psalmist pleads that the Church may be possessed of that same spirit of patient hope, to which he has borne witness as the source of strength and confidence in the individual soul.

Will the great contribution which the coming generation is to make, under God, to the history of Christian faith and thought, be the re-discovery of the Church? We do not know: but in this direction, if in any, lies the present way of Hope. For the duty of Hope, be it remembered, is not to refuse to see the worst, but to see even in the worst a potential better or best. "How is it possible to hope, when everything seems so hopeless?" is a question which can easily be answered, if we remind ourselves that the need for Hope can scarcely be said to have begun, till the outlook is apparently hopeless. "Hope defies arithmetic." Hope is like the oxygen tubes in the sick-room: it assumes a desperate situation. And the duty of Hope in such a situation is to watch: to mark the slightest sign which points to the chance of recovery, to be ever on the look-out for the faintest gleam of light in the darkness: and in that sign, in that single gleam, to see the possibilities

of the future. One is tempted to ask what sort of Hope it is which is represented as playing, with eyes blindfolded, on a lyre with a single string. It certainly is not Christian Hope. The lyre with all its strings broken save one we would not quarrel with; that were indeed a sorry instrument from which to wring "the music of the spheres." But it is the bandaged eyes which move us to protest: Despair, not Hope, has lost the eyes to see. For here, if anywhere, should the eyes be open wide and staring: and on the single string they should be fixed, with every possible atom of concentration. If that were to snap, then must the lyre be dumb indeed; but so long as the one string remain, melody of some kind is still conceivable. It is not without reason that St. Thomas Aquinas mentions Hope as being common to the young and the drunken. They afford indeed the obvious examples of perseverance with the single string; for it is their habit to insist, with a querulous monotony, on the prosecution of efforts which seem unreasonable to the aged or the more temperate.

Hope, then, is the great "Watcher on Look-out Mountain." With eyes wide open, she stands upright, alert, discriminating, and brave. Whatever she sees of worth or promise, on that she will fasten: and that which she has fastened upon she will not let go, till it be blessed.

What is her vision to-day, as she looks out upon our Church? What is there of promise for the time that is coming? Is it too much to say that the hope lies in this, that in the Church alone can be found all the best that the world is now seeking? These are bold words, and call for proof. Let us see whether such is to be found.

(1) For some years past there has been a growing tendency in theological thought to lay stress upon the Church: first, as the centre of salvation; and secondly, as the sphere in which the spirit of Christianity can alone be interpreted and its crucial truths be put to the test. There would be nothing which is not commonplace in this, were the tendency to be manifested in quarters where Orthodoxy would be unquestioned: but it is rendered striking by the fact that it has come to us across the seas, from those whose names we are accustomed to associate with a "liberal" theology. We should, indeed, look in vain for the exact terminology to which we are accustomed. We should find, for instance, an expression such as "Loyalty to the beloved Community" taking the place of "good Churchmanship," or "faithful citizenship of the Kingdom"; and, if we were ultra-critical, the language might strike us as not without affectation. But these are not days in which to quarrel over words: and Hope will seek for the meaning which underlies them.

The idea underlying the first of these two tendencies is not unfamiliar. "Outside the Church there is no salvation" was the old way of expressing the truth, and there is little difference between this and such a sentence as the following: "The salvation of the individual man is determined by some sort of membership in a certain spiritual community—a religious community, and in its inmost nature, a divine community."¹ This is the outlook from which, to use more technical language, the Church is regarded as the normal sphere of Grace, as the society in and through which the mighty works of God are done. It represents a reaction from an individualistic conception of salvation, such as that which

¹ J. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, vol. i, p. 39.

was produced by the subjectivity of modern religion referred to in a previous chapter. We have seen a similar swing of the pendulum in our own Church History. In the Evangelical Revival, personal faith and personal assurance were the conditions insisted upon as necessary to salvation ; while, in the early days of the Tractarian Movement, those who had been admitted by Baptism into the Church were called upon to realize their high calling, as members of the Divine Society. There is little profit to be gained from the inquiry as to which of these two positions received the greater emphasis in our Lord's teaching. But there can be no doubt that, if He insisted on personal conversion as the passport of entry into the Kingdom, and pleaded for the pursuit of a certain way of life on the part of the citizens, no less certainly was the coming and completion of the Kingdom uppermost in His thoughts, from the proclamation of His mission at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, to His teaching of the Last Things and the Judgment. Nor is it possible to discuss the various controversies which have divided the ranks of the Church, beyond noticing the fact that more than once an over-emphasis or the lack of emphasis on one or other of these two conceptions has formed the battleground of the contending parties. The important point to remark is that the pendulum has at the present time swung very definitely in one direction, in the most virile of contemporary religious thought : the direction where the demand is created for a revival and a re-emphasizing of the idea of the Divine Community, the Church. The theories of the theologian as a rule take much time to percolate through to the rank and file of the Church. So it might have been in this case had not developments in a very different field, which we shall

notice, provoked exactly the coincidence which was needed.

In the second of these tendencies is to be found the stress which has been laid upon the Church as the testing-ground, as well as the centre, of Christian Faith and Life. The author previously quoted writes as follows: "The primitive Christianity of the sayings of the Master was both enriched and deepened by the interpretation which the Christian Community gave to his person, his work, and to his whole religion";¹ and he writes further of the Community, that in its life the Christian virtues "are to reach their highest expression, and the spirit of the Master is to obtain its earthly fulfilment."² Thus far the Harvard professor: so far, that is, as St. Paul went, in the ideal of the Church which he put before the Christian community at Ephesus, or as St. John and St. James in their General Epistles.

This does not only mean that the Religion of Christ is a social religion, or that its virtues cannot be practised in isolation, though even this we have not always remembered in England. It means that in the Church—considered both as a whole and also as a number of Church congregations—the world is to find a working model of human society as seen in the vision of Jesus, an "earthly fulfilment" of the ideal of the City of God, and a practical exposition of those social qualities which our Lord laid down as characteristic of the citizens of His Kingdom. In other words, that what the outspoken layman of to-day—and do not let us be afraid of his outspokenness—knows as "all this 'dear brother' business," is something which is real and practicable and admirable; that we should be able to take any who seek—whether

¹ J. Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, vol. I, p. 33.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

it be the tramp from the lodging-house who asks for a friend, the philosopher who is searching for the highest social ideal, the tempted and the sorrowful who are craving for sympathy, or the pragmatist who is prepared to find in the usefulness of any system at least a partial guarantee of its truth—and should be able to say to them: “You have heard tell of the Christian aim and the Christian way of life, and some of its watchwords are not unfamiliar to you: ‘Love one another,’ ‘Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only,’ ‘In honour preferring one another,’ ‘Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another,’ ‘Love not the world,’ ‘Speak not evil one of another’: if you would see the Community in which these commands are obeyed, and this way of life is carried out, look round you at the Church of God, and you will find that for which you seek.”

In these demands lies hope for the Church, because in the Church alone can they be satisfied.

(2) It has been mentioned that as a rule the outlook of the theologian is ahead of the average opinion in the Church, that it takes time for the conception of the truth, as he sees it, of life or doctrine, to receive its practical expression in the life and worship of the Church. Sometimes the process of recognition and expression is retarded or quickened by events and developments which are not within his control. Of one such development we must tell, in our search for the grounds of Hope.

Hearsay evidence is notoriously unsatisfactory, and it becomes the more so when it is contradictory. There are few matters about which it is more difficult to learn the truth (or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, about which it is more difficult to make any general

statement which would not need qualification in almost every detail), than the religious outlook of our soldiers on active service. *È pur si muove*. Some movement is taking place. This is perhaps the most that can be said, in general, at present. There has been, however, a bulk of evidence, from the most trustworthy sources, that our soldiers have found in the Holy Communion the religious expression of that fellowship and brotherhood which has characterized our army since the outbreak of war. For our present purpose, the exact significance of their motive in receiving the Blessed Sacrament is immaterial. They may in some cases have regarded It in the light of the stirrup-cup before the battle: the preservation of the body may have occupied a more prominent place in the thoughts of some than that of the soul; the most devout would certainly have looked upon the act of receiving It as a definite act of oblation—the offering of themselves, in life or death, to God. But it is material that, from a very large mass of evidence, one truth stands out clearly, that the Holy Communion has been for them the Sacrament of Fellowship; or, in the words of the Prayer-Book, they are learning that they are very members incorporate in the mystical body of God's Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people. If that has been an almost universal experience, is there not at least a hope that it will also remain an enduring memory: that the need for such fellowship will survive, long after the events which have called it forth will have passed away, and that they will seek for the centre of that fellowship in the Church? Whether or not it will be so, it is idle to conjecture; but this at least may be said—and no more is needed to emphasize the point which we are concerned to establish—that, if in the spheres of thought and action alike, independent but converging

ideas are to be found, and a common desire is expressed which can only meet with fulfilment and satisfaction in the Church, nothing but utter faithlessness can lead us to deny that there are grounds for Hope.

(3) For the third of the world's needs, we have but to look out upon the world's work. We have grown familiar with the taunt that two thousand years of Christianity have "resulted" in a World War. The accuracy of the phrasing we would indeed question: but a rebuke of this kind is not without value, if we are urged by it to a more complete understanding, and a more careful definition, of words and phrases which we habitually use. Of these words, "Christianity" is certainly not the least indefinite: and the weakness of it is patent. For if the word be hard to define, the idea of it will be still harder to grasp, and the voice of it will be uncertain, even if means be found of utterance. Now in times of crisis, when there is need for "Christian opinion" to find expression and to make its influence felt, no amount of "Christianity" will provide either the driving-power or the machinery which are needed. "Christianity" has no voice, because it is without a body. Whatever power it may possess is useless in a crisis, for there is no authority behind it. What we seek for is a society which has both authority and power, which is on a higher level than, and therefore independent of, national and sectional prejudices or interests: a society, in other words, which is supernatural in authority, superhuman in power, and super-national in its outlook.

The possibility at first appears staggering; yet, if we consider the phrases, we recognize that two of the three represent ideas which are inherent in any

conception of a Catholic Church. The very essence of the Church is that its commission is Divine: the very essence of that commission is that it should be universal: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." "Go ye into all the world." But even if these two conceptions were realized, there would still remain the need of the third: the power to enforce the authority of which the Church stands possessed. Is it possible that these hopes can ever be fulfilled? that the Church can ever take this foremost place in the world's work? The answer may be ventured that the Church's authority will be realized when her faith is stronger in her Divine Lord: that the power will pass to the Church, when "our unhappy divisions" are no more: and that the Church will rise above national and sectional interests when she casts out her worldliness and becomes fired with missionary zeal. Then indeed will the Church fulfil the world's greatest needs.

No other society can show such credentials. It is the office of Hope to see the Vision—the function of Prayer and Faith to fulfil it.

The above list could be extended without difficulty: but, if it be true that even in these three ways the Church alone is capable of satisfying the world's demands, it remains to ask, what should be the present attitude of the Church, in the face of this hope? Surely it should be to "greet the unseen with a cheer." Has not the time come when the worst that could be said about the Church has been said and re-said both by friends within and foes without? A year ago, conditions far different prevailed. There was a general spirit of unrest in the Church, an uneasy suspicion that something was wrong: that certain things wanted

saying, fearlessly and even brutally: that there was a good deal to be dragged into the light and boldly faced, before confidence could be restored. But who would be prepared to deny that much has been effected in the past year; that the Church has made a real effort to "know itself"; that great signs of God's power and of man's response have been given; that penitence has led, as it leads always, to recovery; and that we are on the road to better things? The chief need now is that we should—

"Look sunward, and with faces golden
Speak to each other softly of a hope."

We would be spared further allusions to the householder and his treasure. We have heard the "new wine and old bottles" sermon so often that there is a danger lest many may prefer the old which they know, with all its inconsistencies and anomalies, to the amazing and innumerable possibilities which appear to lie concealed in the new. And there are two ways, be it remembered, in which the old wine may be wasted. Either the old wine-skins may perish, or an attempt may be made to effect the transfer before the new skins are ready to receive the wine. Both ways lies disaster. We have been assured by the leaders of our Church that the deliberations of the last year are to be continued and extended through the year that is coming: that no past effort will be wasted: and that whatever success God has granted to the National Mission is to be but the starting-point and the inspiration of new and continued effort. It would be idle to deny that much remains to be done—much that will be done in the Church, God grant, by wise and strong leadership from above, which remains the chief

source of initiative in a Church organized on an undemocratic basis. But, in the meantime, let us hope and work and pray. Let us think the best, and say the best, as well as the worst, to our friends with whom we discuss the Church. Nothing can hide the Church's failures: they are obvious to all. But let us rejoice to tell of any successes which, under God, have been granted to the Church, for it is through us alone that these can be made known. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

The opposite of this attitude is that "gently complaining spirit," which can be one of the most enervating influences in life; which, if it be not guarded against, in the life for instance of a young priest, can take the spring from his step and the heart from his work, and rob him of any power to bring the message of Christian joy into the homes and hearts of his people. We cling, in this as in everything, to those pledges which God has given. "Rejoicing in hope" let us remember the promises: "On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." "Only be strong."

Lastly, we will not forget the source and the object of our hope. O Israel, hope *in the Lord*. Simply God, His Will, His Love, and nothing else. He is the only objective of those who believe in His Name. Because we have forgotten this, the Church is not one. We have centred our hopes on the carrying out of the ambitions and the desires of the smaller unit. For how many years has the great hope been lost sight of in a cloud of petty schemes, party efforts, ill-timed conferences, hasty

resolutions, and the miserable failures in which they have resulted? And time after time we are driven back to recognize that here is the real stumbling-block; that progress on any large scale, without unity, is impossible; that we are the obstruction, and not God or our fellow-men. We meet round a table to discuss some question affecting the life or faith of the Church, and for a time all goes well. We find that the divisions are not so serious as we had feared: and then, just at the point when some kind of agreement seems within reach, we find that we have cut across party divisions, and the result is a deadlock, or at the best a compromise which is unsatisfactory to all alike. This is no imaginary picture: it has happened again and again. We may speak of a "spiritual unity" and derive what comfort we can from the thought. We may boast of our "common Christianity" and say how much nearer we are to one another than ever we had known: while in our hearts we know that the practical difficulty remains, and will remain, till we approach the problems in a different spirit. "And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is even in Thee."

Have we not had good cause more than once to acknowledge the wisdom of the warning which Oliver Cromwell gave to the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland: "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken"?¹

It is not difficult to base our prayers on the conviction that those who do not agree with us are in the wrong, rather than on the possibility that we ourselves may not be in the right. It is easy to pray that others may be led to see the truth, if all we mean by the truth is our own point of view. It is a different matter to confess

¹ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, Vol. II, p. 169.

our own utter blindness, the failures of our judgment in the past, the mistakes which we have made, our lack of charity, and the bluntness of vision which has been caused by our own sin ; and then, in the spirit of penitence, to pray, not that those who do not agree with us may be brought to our own point of view, but that if we are wrong, we may by God's grace be shown our failings, and that both we and they may be led by the Holy Spirit to see only as through the eyes of God.

CHAPTER XI

OF OUR REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

“With Him is plenteous redemption.”

THESE words were written by one who lived centuries before the Incarnation, the Perfect Life, and the Crucifixion. Yet he confesses that there is “plenteous redemption” with God. What words would he not have used to describe the love which God has since shown in “the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,” in “the means of grace” and in “the hope of glory”? It is of this full redemption which Christians will naturally think, as they read this last verse of the Psalm.

Were we asked the question, How was our Redemption won? it is probable that we should answer, Through Christ; or, Through the Cross: and, if we ourselves were in no doubt as to what we meant by the answers, few Christians would be found to quarrel with them. Yet care is needed even in such a definition as this. Neither our Lord's Person nor His Cross have been exempt from misunderstanding and confusion of thought: and this is particularly true to-day. Rather let us say that our redemption was won, not through Christ, nor yet through the Cross, nor even through the Cross of Christ, but through Christ crucified. For if we think of the Cross apart from Christ, it becomes an abstract symbol of self-sacrifice: and if we conceive of Christ,

apart from His Cross, we are in danger of regarding Him merely as a teacher, or as a philanthropist who "went about doing good."

An instance of this confusion may be found in the following quotation from a widely read book. "It is altogether too rashly assumed," the author writes, "by people whose sentimentality outruns their knowledge, that Christianity is essentially an attempt to carry out the personal teachings of Christ. It is nothing of the sort, and no Church authority would support that idea. . . . Christ, indeed, is not even its symbol: on the contrary, the chosen symbol of Christianity is the Cross to which Christ was nailed, and on which He died." To criticize this paragraph in detail would not be a difficult matter: here it is only necessary to point out that it gives just the illustration which is required for our present purpose. Either Christianity, in the eyes of the critic, is an attempt to carry out the teachings of Christ, or else its symbol is "the Cross," the Cross without the Crucified. In neither of these lies our Redemption. We cannot separate either Christ from His Cross, or the Cross from Christ. Our redemption is to be found in Christ on the Cross, in Christ crucified.

Many books have been written on the Atonement. In some of them we shall find certain aspects of the truth emphasized more than others; but common to them all will be found two conceptions: that the Atonement was effected in order to manifest, even to justify, the character of God; and to satisfy the needs of man. This is the common ground on which all Christians would take their stand: and if, in the following pages, emphasis be laid on the former of these truths, the intention is—it need hardly be said—not to propound an explanation, but to suggest a perspective.

We have thought already of the great danger which besets our conception of God, that all the attributes which we have been accustomed to ascribe to Him may become lost in a confusion of words and phrases. Yet it is surely a truth beyond dispute, that a knowledge of the revealed character of God is essential, if we would make any attempt to explain the meaning of our Lord's death upon the Cross. He Himself insisted on the connexion between the Old Dispensation and the New: He was not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it: salvation was "of the Jews." However wide might be the purpose of salvation, its background was the revelation given to the people of Israel, and its historical setting was the story of their race. If—as was said of Thomas Carlyle—some people have no New Testament in their Bibles, it is equally true that in some Bibles the Old Testament has no place. Yet, if the atoning death of Christ was an act of God, "once in time," the events which preceded it in point of time, in other words God's previous revelations of Himself, cannot rightly be omitted from any inquiry into the meaning of the Crucifixion.

As this point is of much importance, an illustration may be allowed. If we can picture a student of the Great War, twenty years hence, omitting to read the history of its first eighteen months and of the causes which led to the introduction of compulsory military service in this country, and being suddenly brought face to face with the fact that such a step was taken, can we not imagine how entirely foreign to anything which he had previously known of the English character the adoption of such a measure would appear? He would recall the history of many generations of independence and peace, in a country world-famed for liberty and the

freedom of its institutions, in which the word Compulsion had always borne a sinister meaning. How utterly unlike, he would exclaim, this seems to all that I had known of English methods! Was there really need for it? And only by reading how (in spite of all the individual sacrifices, and the stupendous efforts, public and private, which were made in order to avoid the necessity of taking such a step) it at last became inevitable, would he understand that it was possible for our country to become involved in such a system. The circumstances which led up to, and made inevitable, the passing of such a measure would constitute at once a reason and a justification.

Similarly, should we not believe that, if an enquirer were to regard the Crucifixion as an event which happened on a certain day in the world's history, and were to consider it as isolated entirely, alike from the assumed need for it and from God's previous revelations of Himself, he would exclaim, How utterly unlike this is to all that I have imagined of the character of God. Was there really need for it? And only by regarding the Cross of Christ in its historical setting, would he understand that it was a necessity, from the consideration alike of the character of God and the needs of man. These are the two factors which together explain and justify the Crucifixion of our Lord. Let us examine each of them separately.

Four great attributes of God stand out most clearly from the pages of the Old Testament. Four lives were used to proclaim these truths.

It was in the eighth century before Christ that a citizen of Jerusalem, of noble birth, burning with a passionate desire to see his nation delivered from its sufferings and

enjoying the blessings which were its birthright, waited for the Voice of God, which should give him a message for the people he longed to save. There came a day when for him the earth and all that was in it were no longer, when the boundaries of his senses fell away, and the whole world became a presence, a glory, and a song: "I saw the Lord high and lifted up"—the splendour of His palace veiled in mist, and the air throbbing with the song of the Seraphim: Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts. Of God Himself that is all. Isaiah cannot describe Him, but he has seen His glory. He cannot define God, but he has something to tell of Him. In a single word shall be expressed the gulf which separates men from God—the word which gave the Law of Holiness its name: "Speak unto the congregation of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy." Of such a kind was the vision: and from that day the chant of the Seraphim shall be the burden of his life's message. *God is Holy.*

A few years before, a simple shepherd who kept his flock in the wilderness on the borders of Judæa, with no special training but the solitude of the desert and the silence of its nights, was sent to teach a nation the meaning of its history. "The Lord took me"—untutored and rude, no prophet nor a prophet's son—"as I followed the flock." Such are the only credentials which Amos can show. "And He said, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel."

The centre of his message is to be the righteousness of God. Could the nation but read their own history in the light of God's dealings with them! Had any people been blessed and guided as they had been, by Almighty God? Had any people so consistently

responded to God's love with rebellion and refusal? God's honour must be vindicated. "I saw the Lord standing over the Altar; and He said, Smite." "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." Only in one way can the final judgment be warded off. "Let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." This is God's demand. Being what He is, He can ask no less. *God is Righteous.*

Not many years later, it was given to a native of northern Israel to receive one of the highest revelations of the character of God, which is to be found in the Old Testament writings. And because this message was to be the highest, his agony was the greatest. He was bidden to act a living parable, from the details of which we almost shrink, in order that he might be able to tell of the unending love of God, and of the possibility of recovery for all. To Hosea the command was this: Take you a wife, a wife who will not be faithful to you, for she has been faithless to many, and she sells her love to men. With this bad-hearted creature you shall live: and, as you live with her, you will watch her nature, fickle, hard, and vain. Day by day you will learn that the love for which you seek can never be yours. And there, in your home, the iron will enter into your soul: and you will see how Israel has treated the God of Israel's fathers. A home, indeed, for a prophet! Yes, for in that home he was to see the tragedy of his nation's history. In the relationship between himself and his wife, he was to see how things stood between the nation and its God. And, then, out from the home where his heart had been broken, he was to go to the people and tell them that they were breaking the heart of God.

So Hosea's appeal rings through the land: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord." And men listen, and they buy and sell; they marry and are given in marriage; they eat and drink, and go their way. If this be their answer to God's invitation, surely "my God will cast them away." Not yet; for there is one more message which he is to carry to the people. Never, perhaps, could the prophet feel again the love which once he had given to her who was called his wife: never could he forgive. But let him know that God is more merciful, that God still loves. And, then, across this awful scene of a wrecked home and a ruined people, there is heard the tenderest call of the Old Testament, the call of a God Who will never give a nation up: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I let thee go, O Israel?" God is ever pleading, ever calling, ever yearning. *God is Love.*

Once more; the darkness has come. God's judgments have fallen, and the nation is in exile. By the waters of Babylon they are learning to sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land. The vision of the Holy City and of their homes seems to have vanished for ever: it is the darkest hour of their history. Yet even in that dark hour, even in that far-off land, a young priest dreams his dreams, and sees his vision of hope, of the nation that is to be. Carried away by the Hand of the Lord and in His Spirit, he treads in the valley upon the bones of dead men. Little enough did there seem of hope that these dry bones should ever come to life. Yet the words of prophecy and command are placed upon Ezekiel's lips. The dead are restored: into the bones comes a new life. "The breath came

into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army." *God is Life.*

From our first consideration, therefore, there emerge these four truths of the character of God—God is Holy : God is Righteous : God is Love : God is Life.

The second consideration is of the needs of man : and here we will deal only with those by whom the need is felt. Later consideration will be given to the case of those who have seen no vision beyond the limits of their senses, but for the present the inquiry is confined to the desires of those who believe in the reality of communion with God. Are we able to trace any clearly defined needs and longings, which can be recognized as almost universal? Certainly we are : common to almost all those who accept the possibility of communion with God, are to be found three great longings.

The first of these is for *deliverance*, from that which stands between them and God ; from something in their nature which prevents that frank intercourse with God which they know to be their birthright ; from something which ties their nature down : deliverance, in a single word, from that which we know as Sin. By whatever name we like to call it, this at least is a reality : the "ineradicable taint" which the least experienced student of his own nature cannot fail to recognize : the existence and the power of which even those who have little sympathy with theology have been forced to admit as something to be reckoned with, even if they can suggest no means of remedy or escape. But while some have been content to do no more than to acknowledge its existence, there have never been wanting those who have refused to believe that there is no escape from this sense-bound and sin-bound condition, who have echoed

the cry of St. Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But *restoration* is needed as well as deliverance. If the result of sin be separation from God, delivery from it leads no less certainly to a longing for a readjustment of our relationship with Him. We are left in no doubt as to what this is: we know that our destiny is to be in fact, as well as in name, sons of God: and we were made "the children of God" at our Baptism. We have failed to live up to this vocation to which we have been called. Again and again that relationship has been—not broken, for that can never be—but obscured by our own wilfulness. The delivery from sin does not satisfy us on this point. We crave for the assurance that restoration can be accomplished. The fear of the prodigal was that he had forfeited all claim to the restoration of this true relationship. To be a hired servant in his father's home was the utmost he could hope for, when he felt himself unworthy to be called his father's son.

The third need, perhaps the most pressing, is certainly the most fundamental. It is the need of *change*. The delivery from sin and the restoration of the true relationship to the Father result in a longing for a complete change of nature which will effect a hatred of the sin that separates, and a love of the union which holds together: which will make temptation more easy to be resisted, and will preserve intact the new and true relationship. The fulfilment of this need is clearly the most difficult of all, because it strikes more deeply at the source of the evil, and deals not only with actions but also with the will which prompts them. To offer a means of escape from the guilt of committed sin is to confer a mighty benefit; to effect a complete change in

the nature which made the sin possible is to provide a blessing indeed.

Such, then, are the considerations from which we approach the crucifixion of our Lord: and we pass to the inquiry as to whether we can find in it a manifestation of that character of God as we know it, and a fulfilment of the needs of man.

God is Righteous. He is the giver of the moral law, and through that law He showed His righteousness to men. From the day of the giving of the law, man's duty was clear: it was to strive after the attainment of God's righteousness through perfect obedience to the Law. It may be true to say that had man been able to attain, there would have been no need for the Crucifixion. But man found the task, as he does still, beyond his powers. To know the law was not difficult, but to fulfil its requirements proved impossible. Therefore God gave to the world the greatest revelation of His righteousness, and with it the power which all who longed to gain that righteousness had desired. In the life and death of Christ, God's righteousness is manifested, in a new Spirit, to man. St. Paul, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, rejoices in this new manifestation: he sees that what the law could not do, because it was "weak through the flesh," Christ accomplished when, in the likeness of sinful flesh, He lived and died. By His perfect Life, He vindicated the claim of the moral law, of the righteousness of God; and, by His obedience to that law "even unto death," He broke the power of sin, and "condemned sin in the flesh." Through Him we are set at liberty from the law of sin and death, and are free to follow the law of the spirit of life, in the obedience to which

we shall find the righteousness which God demands from us.

God is Holy. There is no escape through the Law. The world is yet in its sin. To vindicate His Holiness, it was needed that God should give to the world some sign, awful and unmistakable, of the horror with which an All-Holy God regarded sin: that He should afford some terrible contrast between the sin of man and the Holiness of God. The unanswered question, Which of you convinceth Me of sin? is evidence enough for the utter contrast between our Lord's life and the lives of the people among whom He laboured: yet here the revelation is one of the love of God for men rather than of the hatred of God for sin. But in the Crucifixion man saw the crowning revelation of the Holiness of God. The message to Isaiah was given in a vision which none but he could see. The message of the Crucifixion was given to all, so that all might understand at once the effect of their sin and the awful Holiness of God.

God is Love. He "spared not His own Son." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor." These and many similar words, consecrated by the remembrance of the earliest lessons we received in the Christian Faith, cherished in moments of difficulty and doubt, will always—God grant it—be our great assurance. Far removed from the sin and hatred of the world, undimmed by the clouds of controversy, and irresistible in their appeal, the words come back to us unceasingly, as we ponder the story of God's redeeming love: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God is Life. Only by Him Who gave life could life be restored. By the offering of the Perfect Life, the new life is offered to men: yet through death alone could that life be given. The Holy Ghost is called the Giver of Life, but the life which He gives flows from the Crucified. The Holy Spirit could not be given till Jesus was glorified, and Jesus could not be glorified till He had been crucified. The Blood which He shed in His death is the Blood of His life, His Life-Blood. And just as we do wrong to separate the Atonement from the Incarnation, when we are thinking of Redemption, so must we not separate the Crucifixion from the Resurrection when we are thinking of Life. "I am He that liveth, and was dead"—only through death did He pass to life—"and, behold, I am alive for evermore." True to all that He had revealed of Himself God gave new life to the world, and it was a life gained and restored through the death of Him Who alone could give it.

If this be true; if in the Crucifixion of our Lord we can trace just those attributes which He had revealed as His own to the chosen people, may we not say that, above all else, the redeeming death of Christ is a mighty manifestation of the character of God?

We pass on to ask how far the acknowledged needs of man's nature are satisfied by the Crucifixion of our Lord. The first of these, we remember, was for *deliverance*: and for a deliverance which must come from some Power external to man himself. This point need not be laboured. The history of religious thought gives to nothing a more prominent place than to the growth of these two truths side by side—the need for deliverance, and the helplessness of man to deliver himself. But what man could not effect, God achieved. In offering

the supreme Sacrifice, our Lord gave proof of the terrible hold which sin had upon the world, and the mighty cost at which deliverance was effected. If an unspeakable catastrophe was needed to show the horror of sin and at the same time to provide deliverance from its power, that need was surely satisfied when Christ died upon the Cross.

This we should ever keep in mind. However constantly and with whatever different meanings we speak of "The Cross," it must never be forgotten that the conception of deliverance, of Salvation, lies at the very root of the Incarnation and the Atonement. "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "Unto you is born a Saviour." "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." The power of that salvation has been shown to the uttermost, as human experience has told again and again.

For "when all else has failed; when examples fail to rouse, and precepts fail to guide; when sin has proved too strong for reasoning, for the sight of the wretchedness it brings with it, for fear of hell hereafter, for bitter experience of hell here; when we have fought and been beaten, and at last have given up hope; when our hearts are grown too cold for words of eloquence to reach them; when we have settled down despairingly in sinful habits, still fretting inwardly at the horror that lies before us; even then the Cross of Christ may yet save us with its simple story. . . . What the head cannot compass the heart can feed on . . . for He loved us and gave Himself to die for us."¹

And it is here that the power of Christ crucified is

¹ *Thoughts on the Divine Love*, by Archbishop Temple. It would be difficult to find better reading for Holy Week than the incomparable Good Friday Sermons published in this little book.
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most truly felt. It has been a common experience of those who have ministered to our troops on active service that, while many a tired soldier has been uplifted and encouraged by the sight of the Crucifix still hanging or standing in some shell-torn village, the true meaning of the Sacred Sign has never been realized, till, by the light perhaps of a few candles in a tumble-down barn, there have risen from the lips of men who had long forgotten them, the old words of the children's hymn—

... Where the dear Lord was crucified
 Who died *to save us all*.
 He died *that we might be forgiven* . . .

So, while each makes the Cross his own, and finds in it and cherishes that which helps him most—for its riches are inexhaustible—let this truth be welcomed by all alike, that He Who “hung and suffered there” was the Deliverer from sin and the Saviour of the world. This He Himself proclaimed as His work. These are the Names by which He is known and summoned by thousands of struggling souls. The act of the Crucifixion is explained by its intention. In the purpose of the Cross lies its power.

Through Christ crucified is also given to us the certainty of *restoration*. There is of course no real separation, either in point of time or of experience, between the actual delivery from sin and the restoration to God: yet in the human conception of restoration as a definite blessing which flows from the Cross, we may think of it apart from the deliverance with which it is immediately connected. It has often given cause for surprise to those who have been at little pains to understand the Church and its Faith, that great stress should be laid upon certain points of doctrine which seem to them of little importance: such, for instance,

as the twofold Nature in our Lord's Person. This is not altogether surprising, for it is not until we inquire seriously and prayerfully into the meaning and implication of the Church's Faith that we see the need of a definite statement of belief. In the subject under consideration, for instance, it is specially important to notice how we are helped to understand the restoration which is effected by Christ crucified, by our conception of His Nature and Person. It needed more than man to restore, as it needed more than man to deliver. Yet it needed man as well as God to effect the restoration, so that the hope might be for all mankind. Thus we consider that, inasmuch as our Lord was God, He was able through His Life and Death to bring about that which man had proved powerless to effect: while, inasmuch as He was True Man, He showed to the world in the great offering upon the Cross the perfect sonship, obedient even unto death. Offering, as man, the sacrifice of Humanity, He made possible the restoration of the human race which He represented on the Cross. We were afar off and we have now been brought nigh through Him. The offering of Him Who was at once the Son of God and the brother of all frail men has brought man and God together in a union for which man had longed in vain.

Finally, we come to the greatest gain—passing from what Christ did for us to what He does in us—the complete *change* in man's nature which can be effected by Christ crucified. We are not unready to recognize that in His teaching our Lord insisted not only on the possibility, but on the necessity, of such a change. It was this demand that He made upon Nicodemus: That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and unless a man be born again, of Water and of the Spirit, he

cannot enter the Kingdom of God. It was the lesson which He taught to the disciples when they wrangled among themselves as to who should be the greatest in the Kingdom. Let them first be sure that they had entered it. The way of entry was conversion, the complete change from the wilful and overloaded nature of the grown man to the unspoiled simplicity of the little child. But when we pass from our Lord's teaching to His Crucifixion, we are apt to forget that *through His death* we are summoned and enabled to make that change as complete as possible. Did not Matthew Arnold interpret most faithfully the mind of St. Paul, and surely of our Lord Himself also, when he wrote as follows, concerning the change which is demanded of those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour? "‘He that believes in Christ,’ says Wesley, ‘discerns spiritual things: he is enabled to taste, see, hear, and feel God’: There is nothing practical and solid here. A company of Cornish revivalists will have no difficulty in tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling God twenty times over to-night, and yet may be none the better for it to-morrow morning. When Paul said: In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but Faith that worketh through love: Have faith in Christ!—these words did not mean for Him: ‘Give your hearty belief and consent to the Covenant of grace; Receive the offered benefit of justification through Christ’s imputed righteousness.’ They did not mean: ‘Try and discern spiritual things, try and taste, see, hear, and feel God.’ They did not mean ‘Rest in the finished work of the Saviour.’ No, they meant: *Die with Him.*”¹

This way lies our change—to die with Christ: and

¹ *St. Paul and Protestantism*, p. 50.

the way leads to life, even as He passed from death to life, from Calvary to the Resurrection and the Throne of His Glory. This is the parable of the Christian passing. As the babe at the font is taken from death into the Kingdom of Life; as the Body broken and the Blood outpoured in death are the Living Bread and the Life-Blood by which our bodies and souls are preserved unto everlasting life; as the sinner is restored from the death of sin, in Absolution, to the life of union and fresh endeavour, so is our daily passing to be: from death to life: from the temporal to the eternal: from that which perishes to that which endures. From death, and *through* death; through the agony of sacrifice to the joy of surrender; through the subduing of the flesh to the life of the Spirit; through the killing of all that is mean and earthbound in our natures to the unfettered freedom of the life in Christ.

Yet would we live without tasting death; but it cannot be. We mark the shining faces of those who are "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and we would fain catch from them the joy of that life. Through sacrifice and struggle they gained their joy: through long years, perhaps, when renunciation was hard; and often they fainted by the way. But, as the flesh gradually weakened and died, so did the spirit wax strong in life: and they have reached the goal. To us, who lag behind and follow feebly, they cry aloud the motto of the Christian passing. There is no change without regret: no life without death: no joy without sacrifice: no victory without struggle. Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE NATURE OF SIN, AND OF BRINGING SOULS TO THE REDEEMER

“He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.”

THE great Redemption has been effected through Christ crucified, and those who have felt the need can find it satisfied.

But what, we pass on to ask, of those who have felt no need? “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat.” So runs the invitation, and those who are athirst will come and “stoop down, and drink, and live.” But what of those who have never thirsted for the living water? How shall they be led to come? In the parable of the Sower, we read of many failures; they were all the failures of those who had “heard the Word.” But what of those who have never heard? How is the message of redemption to reach their ears?

Is not this a pressing difficulty, which seems at times almost overwhelming—the difficulty of discovering how it is possible to bring the joy and the power of Religion into the lives of those who have not known it? As we look out upon the world, we see great streams of life going by and leaving the Church altogether on one side, in a spirit of ignorance, hostility, or indifference. How many, for instance, of those whose names are famous in literature, science, art, and economics, the great construc-

tive and creative spheres, are in direct communion with the Church? Is it not clear that for them the Church, as we understand it, simply does not count? This would be generally admitted. Nor is it material for the present purpose that a long list has been published of eminent scientists who believe in God. This only makes the problem more difficult than ever. The longer the list, the more serious becomes the outlook for the Church. For if such be their faith, why have they not joined "the great congregation"? Why is it that there is so little of anything which is dynamic or corporate in their faith, and how can we explain the infinitely small percentage of those admitting their belief in God, who are open and professed communicants of the Church? It is not altogether surprising that those who deliberately sin against the light, either in faith or conduct, will have little to do with the Church: but it should give us reason for serious thought, that we know men and women who would call themselves God-fearing, even Christian, who can recognize no resemblance between the faith which they hold and that of the Church which was intended to include and to inspire them.

It is possible, of course, to answer this question in a way which may not leave us too uncomfortable. We may say with truth that the Church never has attracted the many: that through all its history we see it as something apart from, and directly antagonistic to, the hostile world by which it is surrounded: that the Apostle has been "as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things": and that our Lord warned His first ministers that many would reject their message. Yet is it possible for us to accept this position? Were not our Lord's warnings meant to be words of comfort for the disheartened evangelist, rather than the battle-cry

of a living Church? Surely His conception of the Church was not that of an exclusive sect, but of a world-wide union of believers, embracing all humanity? It is one thing to state the ideal, and another to achieve it: but by merely stating it we are at least brought to recognize our present position, and to be saved from acquiescing in it.

We are therefore faced with this position. Of all those for whom the Lord died, there are but a few who will acknowledge or accept the redemption which He offers. And it is our clear duty as members of His Church to think out how this can be changed. It will be understood that no attempt is here made to "examine the causes of the Church's failure"; to make such an attempt would be to break the pledge given in the preface to this book: nor to apportion the due amount of blame which should be laid at the door either of the unevangelized themselves or of the Church. The intention is rather to suggest two propositions: that a complete change of outlook is essential on the part of the unevangelized: and that a more serious and consistent attempt on the part of Church-people should be made, to realize not only the responsibility which rests with them, but also the power which lies ready to their hand.

"From *all* his sins." Here is the change of outlook which must be regarded as essential to any condition of improvement in the position. Let us be in no doubt of this. Among the many hard battles which the Church will have to wage in the years that are coming, not the least hard will be the struggle to restore to its right meaning, both in the teaching of the Church and in the minds of the people of our country, the word

Sin. Until that is done, there can be no felt need of redemption. In the lack of this lies the apparent powerlessness of the Cross; nor can we expect the appeal of the Crucified to reach the hearts of those who deny the existence of the very condition from which Christ died to save them.

To take an instance of the need for this change of outlook, let us glance at the life of an English family of a noble type: a family, let us say, of good people who know nothing of God. How many households of this kind can we not remember, and what a puzzle they present! For, as we watch the daily life of such a household, we see everything which we have learned to associate with the Christian ideal: unselfish parents, loyal and devoted children: a high moral standard: duties performed from the best of human motives: all that we connect with the Christian life. In what sense is it possible to say that there is sin here? What is it that is wrong?

We can perhaps best answer this question by examining the current conception of sin, and by noting wherein it differs from the Christian view. It would not be unfair to state that the world connects the idea of sin with certain definite acts or words. A man or a woman does or says something which is obviously wrong. This act or that word was sinful. If we say or do such things, we are sinners: or rather, we have sinned. More than this, there is a very considerable limitation in the world's conception of the particular acts or words which would be included under this heading. Such a list would probably be considered fully exhaustive if it included theft, adultery, intemperance and slander. 'Now so long as this view is as widely held as at present, the twentieth-century Englishman who is leading a moral life will

object, perhaps not without good cause, to being included in a category which, as he conceives it, should be confined to drunkards, slanderers, adulterers, and thieves. He would agree entirely with the "comfortably left" farmer's widow in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, to whom "the announcement that she was a sinner appeared an uncivil heresy," and who derived comfort from the thought: "If I'm not to be saved, I know a many as are in a bad way."

Nor does it help towards clearer definition, if we say that the chief need of the modern world is a "sense of sin." If it were suggested to a blind man that his chief need was a sense of sight, would he not reply, Give me eyes that I may see, and then my sense of sight will be restored? So to-day, when we cry aloud for the need of a sense of sin, the moral man who may even be genuinely anxious to experience it will reply, Give me a clear idea of what sin is—which will have to be something very different from that which I now hold—and then there may be a hope that this sense will be granted to me. May we offer him at least this reply? The conception of sin, as you hold it, that is to say of definite actions and words, or rather of a limited number of actions and words, is miserably partial. You will have to extend your conception and make it much more inclusive. We would then read to him the first words of the Baptism Service: "Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born *in sin* . . ." It is likely that he would feel sympathy with the artisan who pointed to these words after a Baptism Service, and said, "He" (meaning the child who had been baptized), "hasn't done much yet, has he?" The two points of view are identical. Sin means the "doing" of something wrong. Why should a child of a few weeks old have this terrible

label attached to it at an age when conscious wrongdoing is impossible?

But the words of the Baptism Service remain, and there are many of a like nature. "*In sin.*" "They that are *in* the flesh cannot please God." "Ye are yet *in* your sins." From which it would appear that sin is a Condition, *in* which we are or may be: in the same way as we speak of ourselves as being in good or bad health. And just as a condition of ill-health results in the weakening of our whole bodily system, so the condition of sin results in the impoverishment of our whole spiritual outlook.

An opportunity is here given of applying the same principle to what we know as temptation. We are accustomed to connect temptation with a momentary impulse to act or speak in a manner that we know to be sinful; which can be countered by an equally momentary and incisive refusal to yield. And we have often been taught that immediate rejection constitutes the only safe means of putting the temptation from us. No doubt this is true of the grosser and more obvious sins before mentioned. But "Lead us not into temptation" means something much wider than this. One of the greatest temptations, because the most subtle and hardest to detect, is the temptation to acquiesce in a certain condition of life. It does not come upon us with a momentary inrush, nor is it met by a single refusal, however immediate: it can only be met by a deliberate raising of the whole tone and standard of life, into a condition which is higher and more spiritual.

At this point we return to the man of moral life, who asks us how we propose to extend the prevailing conception of sin, so as to bring him within the terms of the definition. And we reply that we include him

because of the condition in which he is living. Even if we leave out of sight, in his case, the Flesh and the Devil, we do not forget that there is another sphere of sin, the World, which we are pledged to renounce. And if the World has been rightly defined as "human society organizing itself apart from God," we can apply the definition with equal force and justice to each one of those smaller units which go to make up the whole society. We would therefore press him in this way. Here, we would say, in your home is the small part of society over which you have control. Is it "organized apart from God"? Do you ever say prayers with your family? Do you care whether your children have been confirmed or not? Do you give your servants opportunities of going to church? How long is it since you and your wife went together to the Holy Communion? Have you ever prayed over the son or daughter who sometimes makes you anxious? Or—for there is only one alternative—is your household altogether "organized apart from God"? How different such a household appears to us now. There is the same affection and happiness, the same loyalty and willingness to help; yet we have discovered one thing, *the* one thing, which, as we say, would just make all the difference: which would make our hearts leap for joy as we crossed the threshold of the house. If only God were there! But He does not come into it. The condition is one of a life and lives being organized apart from God. Who can doubt, if the extension of our definition has been followed, that there is sin here?

And if it be necessary to give a name or names to this sin, we will say that here are the two great sins of Condition—the sin of independence of God and the sin of self-satisfaction. Of the first of these our Lord

had much to say. We should search the New Testament in vain for the actual word ; but the idea is found frequently in His teaching. It is the beginning of the Prodigal's history, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me . . . And not many days after the younger son took his journey into a far country." It was a danger of which even the disciples were warned : "Without Me ye can do nothing." It was the sin of the unbelieving Jews : "Ye will *not* come to Me, that ye might have life." "If I say the truth, why do ye *not* believe Me?" "I told you the truth, and ye believed *not*." This is the attitude of negation, condemned in itself : it is the Great Refusal : it is to shut and bolt and bar the door in the face of God : to boast that without Him we can do everything, that we recognize no claim of His upon our lives.

Nor did our Lord leave outside the range of His condemnation those who were satisfied with themselves, whose lives were self-centred, instead of being centred in God. This was the fault of the Pharisees, especially of him who prayed in the Temple with the publican. This was again the fault of the unbelieving Jews : "If ye were blind," said our Lord to them, "ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see : therefore your sin remaineth." If we would prefer to see the same truth expressed in more modern language, we should hardly find it more effectively stated than in the following words : "'Men are thinking of nothing so little as of their sins,' writes Sir Oliver Lodge. 'So much the worse for them,' is the reply. 'It shows only the secularity of their ideals, the shallowness of their sense of the issues that are at stake.' Put in this form the latter, properly interpreted, is the true view, and I think it doubtful whether Sir Oliver would seriously contest it.

There can be no deep religious sense in a soul which does not bear about with it the marks of a life and death struggle, which has not had its vision of the Holy Grail, and been surprised thereby into a sense of the distance between the ordinary level of feeling and achievement, and the height to which it has been called."¹

Have we not here the contrast of the two conditions? On the one hand "shallowness," "secularity," the "ordinary level of feeling and achievement": on the other hand, "the heights to which" the soul "has been called," and the "vision of the Holy Grail"? On the one hand nothing to strive for, nothing to gain; no vision and no hope; a walled-up existence, circumscribed by boundaries of its own making: on the other hand the reach which exceeds the grasp, the vision, the free air of communion with the Highest; and in the far distance the Holy Cup which our stained hands here will never touch, but from which we may some day be fit to drink of the fruit of the vine, when we drink it new in the Kingdom of God.

Sins of Condition! It is these of which we must constantly tell, and as constantly pray to be delivered from: independence, self-satisfaction, pride, self-will: for until they are realized, until the world's conception of sin is enlarged, there is little hope that the appeal of the Cross will fall on any but deaf ears and hardened hearts. But when they are known, then, and not till then, will the world come nearer to the Crucified. Then will it be seen how no single man born of a woman can claim to be independent of the Humanity which our Lord represented on the Cross: how satisfaction with any human achievement is impossible, in the face of the sufferings which God endured for the world's salvation: how pride is inconceivable, as the mind contemplates the utter

¹ J. H. Muirhead, in the *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1904.

humiliation of the Sacred Cross: and how self-will received its death-blow by that prayer, in the strength of which the Divine Sufferer trod the hard road to Calvary: "Not My will, but Thine, be done."

The second suggestion, which may well be put forward in conclusion, is that to all members of Christ's Church the responsibility has been committed and the power has been given to bring souls to the Redeemer. "At the beginning, there was not a teaching Church and a learning Church, but a teaching Church and a learning world. Every Christian, by virtue of his Baptism, was a Teacher and an Apostle. And to each and all of these Apostles He communicates His own authority, His own Spirit, His own mission. 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' 'As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you'"¹

It is clear that, if this be true, there must lie ready to our hand a method of exercising this apostleship, which, inasmuch as the command is laid upon all, will be within the reach of all. Such a method must not call for the exercise of any special gifts. It must not be one which can only be adopted by those to whom God has given peculiar endowments of intellect, of personality, of power, or of eloquence. It must be open alike to the humblest and to the wisest, to the simplest as well as to the most learned. Wherein is it to be found, and how is it to be carried out? The answer is, that our influence is to make itself felt in the world in two ways: by Love and by Witness.

(1) It is almost with diffidence that we ask the question: What has been the effect of our religion upon our nature and character? Of what sort do we prove

¹ George Tyrrell, *Mediævalism*, p. 62.

ourselves to be in the ordinary intercourse of daily life? Has our religion, above all, filled us with love? Or has it left us still hard, rough, and unloving? We are in no ignorance of what our raw human nature is, apart from grace. We have known it only too well, from its manifestations in our lives: in the quarrelsome disposition that brings unhappiness and division into our homes; in the unkind word which need not have been said, in the spiteful or sarcastic letter which need not have been written; in the nursing of petty grievances when a single word would have straightened things out; in the shrinking from some act of charity which would have caused us trifling inconvenience; in the perpetual attempt to close our eyes, from the safety of a comfortable isolation, to the horrible realities of life. Must our confession be something of the following kind? "I have felt the sin of the world with a repulsion which shrinks from it, and not with the fiery sorrow which braves it and wrests souls from its clutches." Or can we say that deep down in our hearts, in spite of all our failings, there is real love? That we do "honour all men"? That in our home we are regarded as consistently willing, cheerful, and unselfish? Above all that we have tried to do all that lies in our power to heal the world's sorrow, and to stem its sin? This is Love. And this it is which wins the world.

The following extract from the diary of a parish priest is perhaps worthy of quotation in this connexion.

"Went to see Mrs. X. She began at once to talk about the Church . . . Asked her how it was that she started coming. She said: 'It was like this. We had never had anything to do with the Church; but the day after my husband met with his accident, Miss ——' (naming one of the lady-workers at the Church) 'came to see him, and knelt down on the hearth and bound

up his ankle, and showed him how to do it for himself. The next night Mr. ——' (naming one of the parish priests) 'came and knocked at the door at about half-past ten. It was a shocking night, and we took his coat off and hung it up to dry, and asked him to have some supper. He said he hadn't had any tea yet, so I made him a cup, and we all sat over the fire, and he talked to us about the Church. He said some prayers before he went, and after he had gone my husband looked into the fire for a long time without saying a word. Then he said, very slowly: "There's one of them comes and kneels down and binds up your foot, and another comes out on a soaking wet night without his tea to tell you about the Church. There's something in these Church-people after all." Then we began to come, and six months after we were confirmed together. And we've been ever since.'"

It is by no freak of the memory or imagination, but by a sure instinct, that the mind recalls two passages from the Gospel story—

Jesus "riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded . . . So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you."—*John xiii.*

". . . They all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner . . . And Jesus

said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house . . . for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—*Luke xix.*

Service and Search! The two duties which shine with a great and wonderful light in the story of our Lord's Life: which men and women to-day are fulfilling, for His sake and the Gospel's, in street and byway and home, from the rising of the sun to its going down: the two duties to which He is for ever summoning, with a Voice which we dare not disobey, all those who have been called by His Name. All—for it is both to laity and clergy that the summons comes. Is it too much to say that the Christian man or woman who has not yet attempted to win another for our Lord, who is hoarding the Great Treasure, has failed in one of the chief duties, as it is assuredly one of the greatest joys, of the Christian life? Or that the priest who "does not believe in visiting" should ask himself whether these may not be some of the "idle words" of which he will have to "give account in the Day of Judgment"?

There's something in these Church-people after all: something in their life which makes them different from the rest of our friends; something which has filled them with a warmth of love and charity which we do not quite find in others; something which has given them a big heart, and a longing to serve and to seek. Was there ever a more true, if unconscious, tribute paid to the power of the redeemed to bring souls to the Redeemer?

(2) We are to be witnesses to the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life; and the sphere of this witness is to be the double one of our business and our private life. It must be confessed that in the former of these two cases the problem which is presented is a baffling one

indeed: for it includes not only the question whether it is possible for a consistent Christian to act up to his profession in certain departments of commerce and industry; but also the wider question, whether the whole present system is not such that a Christian should revolt against it and renounce it. Take the following cases, of which perhaps the first is the most striking.

"It's no good asking me to come to Church"—the speaker was a successful builder—"so long as I have to earn my living, and business is what it is. I'll tell you how it is with me. There was a contract job going a few months back, and I put in for it. If that work had been properly done, strictly according to specifications, it would have cost me not a penny less than £2800. I quoted for £2300, which would have meant that I was only going to 'scamp' £500 worth of work. The man who got the job tendered for £2100."

The following question was asked by a girl-clerk: "What ought I to do? Since the governor heard of the new War-Tax, he has turned two of us on, to do nothing except 'fake' the last year's books, so that he will pay less than he ought to on his profits. If I still come to Communion, ought I to refuse to do it?"

"It's not easy to keep straight in my life," said a communicant who was a commercial traveller. "The other day, one of my customers pointed to a sample I had, and asked if it was going well. He was ready to order half a gross, if I had said that it was a good line: and my commission would have kept me for a week. I knew it hadn't gone well in other parts, but it might have sold all right here. I had had a shocking bad week, and I wanted the money. What ought I to have said?"

And so on, through one case after another: some

more definitely cases of conscience, but others an integral part of the system which produced them : inseparable from business methods, so called, and from the ordinary routine of commercial life. Only a very superficial knowledge is required, in order to realize how tremendously pertinent and widespread these difficulties are : and instances could be multiplied indefinitely. If a commission of inquiry into the subject were ever appointed, and were to present a thorough and unprejudiced report, the result would certainly be of a nature to startle those who have hitherto hardly given a thought to this complex problem. But in the meantime, it will be asked, while the solution of the larger questions must be left in the hands of those who are specially equipped for the task by the extent of their knowledge or the nature of their career, what is the individual to do ? How can he bear his witness ? Would not the answer be something of this kind ? In that which is obviously dishonest or untrue, the consistent Christian can surely have no part. And with regard to the cases in which decision is more difficult, the safest guide is the individual conscience, provided always that the life be such as to justify the conviction that the conscience is under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In private life our duty is usually clearer, even if it be no easier to fulfil ; the difficulty becomes one of Courage rather than of Conscience. For it must never be forgotten that witness consists not only in openly refusing to adopt, let us say, a certain line of conduct, as being inconsistent with the Faith which we profess, but also—and this is the very essence of bearing witness—in openly avowing, if need be, the reason for our refusal. It is, indeed, sad to think how often we have been guilty of

temporizing in this matter. Because I do not care about it: or, Because it does not interest me: or, Because I have no time for that sort of thing: or even, Because I must be going now! How often have these phrases passed our lips, when we have known that the reply of truth and courage would be—"Because I am a Christian." Have we never had cause to remember our Lord's words of warning?

"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father Which is in heaven."

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

So, through Love and Witness, we go forth to claim the world for our Divine Redeemer. We shall meet with many rebuffs, many disappointments: but we follow the way of the Crucified, and "the disciple is not above his Master." Yet there will be Joy: the joy of constant effort, sometimes even of success, perhaps when we least expected it: the joy of bearing an arm in the Holy War and being of the company of Him Who is called Faithful and True, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords: and, if God grant it, there may be one greater joy to come. We know our failures, but the measure of our attainment is often hidden from us. So does God humble His servants here. But may we not hope to find a part of our reward in this: that, when the days of struggle are over, among the number of the Redeemed who will stand in the Holy Presence, and sing the new song before the Throne of God and of

the Lamb, there may be—if it be only one—of the great multitude who will say to us (dare we think it?): “It was you, under God and through His Grace, who led me here”?

* * * * *

O God, Who art worthy of a greater love than I can give or understand, fill my heart with such love towards Thee as may cast out all sloth and fear; that nothing may seem too hard for me to do or suffer, in obedience to Thy Will; and grant that, by thus loving Thee, I may daily become more like unto Thee, and finally obtain the Crown of Life which Thou hast promised to them that love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Iremonger, Rev. F.A.

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Before the morning watch...

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